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Contents

Antiquarian books 662, 670-3
Donald Davie on Keats 651-2
The student revolutionary as dictator – Richard Clogg on Enver Hoxha 667
Donald Mitchell: Mahler's unknown letters 657-8
William Golding's 'Close Quarters' 653
West Coast Jazz, New Orleans rhythm and blues 656

ANTIQUARIAN BOOKS 670, ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY 655, 664, BIBLIOGRAPHY 673,
BIOGRAPHY 659, ENGLISH LITERATURE 651-2, EXPLORATION 654, FICTION 653, 668-9,
HISTORY 666, MUSIC 656-8, PHILOSOPHY 665, POLITICS 667, PUBLISHING HISTORY 672

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TLIS Listings 674-6

Among this week's contributors 660

Author, Author 660

Index of books reviewed 675

Cover picture

Earl Hines: a photograph reproduced from *The Jazz Handbook* by Barry McRae (272pp. Longman. £9.95, 0 582 00920 0).

A genius and his limitations

Donald Davie

JOHN BARNARD
John Keats
172pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50
(paperback, £6.95).
0 521 26691 2

Fifty years ago, when it was widely held that the sort of poetry inaugurated and exemplified by T. S. Eliot was "anti-Romantic", the poets of the Romantic Movement came in for much harsh and derisive criticism. But from these strictures Keats was always exempted. It was F. R. Leavis, one of the influential voices of that time, who asked us to admire "To bend with grace the moss'd cottage-trees", finding there "a strength – a native English strength – lying beyond the scope of the poet who aimed to make English as like Italian as possible". No one seems to have asked whether the phrase "native English strength", so plainly offered as commendation, did not suggest an insular chauvinism; nor whether making English as like Italian as possible (Leavis imputed this endeavour to Tennyson) was self-evidently a discommensurable intention.

Much water has since flowed under bridges: Tennyson has rightly been rehabilitated; Eliot himself has been found to be in many ways a Tennysonian poet; and Leavis's subsequent writings have shown that "insular chauvinism" was indeed a true bill. Yet Keats's reputation continues to enjoy a singular immunity. John Bayley, whose 1962 British Academy lecture flew the flag for a post-Leavisite Keats, was to remark in his *Pushkin: A comparative commentary* how the great Russian poet lacked "the ability of the English Romantic poets to be clumsy with point and power"; and would die, as an instance of such inspired clumsiness, Keats's phrase, "the feel of not to feel it". A mostly adulatory reviewer remarked mildly that "to commiserate with a poet for lacking the ability to be clumsy (however powerfully) seems to be a reach of refinement that would have raised a laugh from either Pushkin or Keats". But Bayley was impenitent, applauding how Keats in the Odes "perfected" his clumsiness. Moreover the grounds for Keats's immunity seemed still to be insular, since his clumsiness was associated with "that wryly complacent English pleasure", which Bayley discerned and endorsed, "in things going wrong or never having been right", something that, he observed with obvious satisfaction, "has become so much a part of English culture

and consciousness". Is this a particular instance of the all too well attested English preference for the amateurish over the professional? Perhaps not. All the same, Bayley's criticism has been credited with showing how "im-perfection, awkwardness, even vulgarity" can "deepen the expressive power of a work" – a prime instance of such deepening being Keats, whose poetry is thus at once convicted of, and absolved from, imperfection, awkwardness and vulgarity. By latter-day champions of Keats we are asked to prefer imperfection to perfection, awkwardness to ease or grace, vulgarity to refinement. A poet whose place in the canon depends on our so drastically reversing normal expectations can hardly be thought secure in his canonical status.

Thus John Barnard's *John Keats* appears at an interesting, ticklish time. The ticklishness is aggravated if we look across the Atlantic, where authorities like Harold Bloom and Helen Vendler have enlisted Keats to vindicate their contention that not Eliot, and certainly not Pound, but Wallace Stevens is the representative great poet of the present century in English. Barnard is aware of them, and quotes from Stevens's *The Man with the Blue Guitar* to argue that not just Keats, but Wordsworth also, are free of Stevens's "surety that nearly resembles complacency". He takes note also of British commentators like Bayley and Christopher Ricks, and follows them in being aware of the chronic instability of Keats's diction, yet is leery of following Bayley's logic by which that instability (productive of "awkwardness, even vulgarity") is worth more than stability would have been. This means that Barnard's tone is mostly dry, cool, uncommitted – a tone of voice that will disappoint many, yet is surely appropriate to the case of this poet at this time. In 1973 Professor Barnard's edition of *The Complete Poems* notably amended what had been the received text; and he does a great service now in being similarly sharp-eyed about received opinion.

What do we mean in this context by stability and instability of diction? We must readily concede that a calculated indecorum at crucial points in a poem is an expressive resource, and one that the best Romantics exploited more often than their precursors (though Dryden for one had a very sure touch with it). But such incidental indecorums depend for their effect on our being aware of the decorum which they violate. And Barnard shows clearly that, when Keats began writing, no such decorum was any longer available. Francis Jeffrey at the *Edin-*

burgh Review thought he still had hold of such a decorum, and a stubbornly old-fashioned poet like Crabbe could continue to observe its rules – for his purposes, very profitably. But Keats and his friends perceived that Jeffrey's sort of decorum had been challenged and displaced beyond retrieval by in particular the practice of Wordsworth, but also by socio-economic developments which had produced a new public for poetry, or rather a range of such publics. Prominent among these was a public for poetry among leisured women of the expanding bourgeoisie. Keats was very deliberately determined not to address this woman's public, and the determination may have cost him the chance of a lucrative reputation. His bloody-mindedness on this score is striking, and his intransigence was not liked nor understood. Byron was a lady's man but hardly a lady's poet, and yet Barnard brings out very well how Byron's bafflement before some of Keats's locutions was not wholly a matter of the conscious aristocrat confronting the cockney. When Byron told Leigh Hunt that he found unintelligible the line "O for a beaker full of the warm South", Hunt reflected comfortably that "the sort of poetry in which he excelled, was not accustomed to these poetical concentrations". But Barnard points out that Hunt had grasped only half of the truth; that when the line is returned to its context it does indeed generate uncertainties that validate Byron's bewilderment.

He generalizes from this instance to say that "Keats's stylistic success exists in an eerie proximity to vulgarity or technical failure". And this, he insists, is no more true of the earlier poetry than the later. A drier word than "eerie" would be "unaccountable". For no one has yet accounted for it, except on the disreputable grounds that nothing succeeds like success, and familiarity through generations of dozing readers has dulled us to what in fact is going on.

In *Endymion*, Peona dries her tears: "Hereat Peona, in their silver source / Shut her pure sorrow-drops with glad exclaim" – which is, from any point of view, excruciating. Yet elsewhere in the same poem we read how "dolphins bob their noses through the brine", where Keats insisted on "bob" when friends urged on him either "raise" or "push". How could a poet, so right about the latter locution, have perpetrated the other? But in saying so we appeal to a standard of decorum that Keats had no access to, since in his time it had not been formulated. Poets of the 1980s who com-

plain that they write in an age when "anything goes" should probably recognize that on the contrary they observe a quite strict decorum (populist and therefore, in a looser sense, indecorous); whereas under the Regency it was indeed true that anything – but anything – went. In such a situation what could a poet do except what Keats did in *Endymion* – learn to swim by throwing himself in at the deep end? Keats, surely a nightmare to his long-suffering publishers, admitted in his Preface that this was what he had done, conceding further that the sensibility in the poem was adolescent:

The imagination of a boy is healthy, and mature imagination of a man is healthy; but there is a space of life in between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick-sighted: thence proceeds mawkishness...

What author before or since ever thus delivered himself, gagged and bound, to the reviewer? How Lockhart in Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine*, and Croker in the *Quarterly*, descended upon and tore the carcass thus offered them, is notorious; and nothing can excuse them. Keats, who disdained a large public, gambled everything on the magnanimity of an élite. Nobody since has taken, or ever will take, such a gamble. The élite is as ungenerous and malevolent as the general public from which it claims to be a saving remnant; and so much for any hopes of "a minority culture".

Thus the purity of Keats's intentions in *Endymion* is irrefutable. And as for the execution? It is more accomplished than most people have pretended, including notably the author himself. For Keats spoke of the poem as if it were entirely an exercise in self-education; it is that, but it is also an attempt to educate the reader, to extend and stimulate the public taste. Nevertheless, we cannot be disarmed. For Keats was right: mawkish the poem is, and vulgar, not just in places but essentially. If it extended the public taste, as in the long run it certainly did, it simultaneously deprived it. The best Victorian taste would indeed comprehend "The mighty ones who have made eternal day / For Greece and England", but at what a cost simply in good sense, let alone good manners! Keats himself counted the cost, as few of his admirers have done from that day to this.

Endymion is a narrative, and although the story-line is so tenuous as to seem no more than a convenience, still it is a necessary convenience, for without the thread of it we should be carried helplessly from one luscious tableau

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Cambridge University Press

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John C. Davis

into another, and not many of us could or should tolerate this through 4,000 lines. Keats was persistently a narrative poet, though most of his modern admirers, from F. R. Leavis to Helen Vendler, have scanted this side of him in their rush to focus on his Odes. Some younger poets in the United States have lately been uncovering indignantly a conspiratorial prejudice against narrative poetry on the part of modern critics, both those who declare themselves "modernist" and those who don't. And this is borne out if we look at how modern criticism has dealt with "The Eve of St Agnes". Leigh Hunt, who seldom gets a good press from writers on Keats, thought this was the poet's masterpiece; and it is a judgment worth pondering. As with other narratives like *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, modern critics find it hard to take Hunt's judgment seriously because they are hung up on an unwarranted distinction between "plot" and "theme", the latter supposed to be something deeper than the plot, which the plot merely shadows and provides for. Hence the question: what is Coleridge's poem, or Keats's poem, "about"? — quite occluding the possibility that these poems are about just what they seem to be about, that the overt and literal meaning (the plot) is all the meaning there is, and quite enough too. So modern commentators have tried to find in "The Eve of St Agnes" a metaphysical or else a psychological "meaning", or else with Douglas Bush they find it "no more than a romantic tapestry of unique richness of colour". The poem tells a story, which is an interesting story since it turns on the perennially interesting question of the nature of sexual passion; and it renders the circumstances of the story with a vividness almost hallucinatory, except that each recorded circumstance can be vindicated from common sense-experience. Add to this that the diction is surprisingly pure within the archaizing register established by Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), and what more can we ask? "Much more" will be the answer only of those who look to poetry to do for them what only religion or more dubiously psychiatry can do. There is nothing specifically or controversially "romantic" about lines like:

A chain-drooped lamp was flickering by each door;
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,
Fluttered in the besieging wind's uproar;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

This is simply very good writing, by any standards: a model for verse-writers, perhaps prose-writers too.

Keats persistently miscalculated his effects, and misjudged his own compositions. The reason was that, like many a poet since, he resented and disliked the public which at the same time he tried to win over and outwit. He was only just prevented, by Woodhouse and Taylor, from spoiling "The Eve of St Agnes", and it is hardly believable that he thought he had surpassed that poem with "Lamia". It is common form to acknowledge that the couplets of "Lamia" were inspired by reading Dryden; what is seldom said is that as soon as Dryden is named Keats is damned by the comparison. Dryden's ability to find a rhyme every ten syllables, without enervating his syntax or disturbing the genial flexibility of his tone, is quite beyond Keats's capacities. Keats wanted here to stop himself identifying with the feelings of his dramatic personae, apparently not realizing that in the St Agnes poem he had triumphantly identified with each of his characters in turn, with the Beadsman and Old Angela as well as with Porphyrio and Madeline. "Lamia" expressed a state of feeling that is plainly in some way morbid, and this will ensure that it will always be "interesting" — especially to those who are interested in how a poem betrays itself, not in how it masters itself. Astonishingly, at the same time Keats was writing his other narrative masterpiece, *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream*, in which, unshackled from rhyme, he could allow his diction to purify itself from acquaintance with Dante as mediated through Henry Cary. Through many acres of lines at a time Keats here achieves a severe and poignant majesty such as he attained nowhere else.

But yet I had a terror of her robes,
And chiefly of the veils, that from her brow
Hung pale and curtained her in mysteries,
And made my hearted soul to hold its breath.

This saw that Goddess, and with sacred hand
Parted the veils. Then saw I a wan face,
Not pined by human sorrows, but bright-blanced
By an immortal sickness which kills not;
It works a constant change, which happy death
Can put no end to; deathwards progressing
To no death was that visage; it had passed
The lily and the snow; and beyond these
I must not think now, though I saw that face —
But for her eyes I should have fled away.

Even now many readers, still heeding the baleful advice "Load every rift with ore", will fail to recognize what a contribution to the total effect is made by the "unpoetic" lines, "And chiefly of the veils, that from her brow", or (more piercingly, of course) "But for her eyes I should have fled away". Where the form is so thoroughly achieved, as much in alert metre as in diction, it is proper to take the content seriously; and Barnard is right to stress how the poem is bitterly anti-Christian. This will distress some, though fewer than in the past. They may console themselves by noting that whereas the earlier *Hyperion* had been consciously designed as "a Fragment", *The Fall of Hyperion* merely breaks off, unfinished — as if the attempt to explain suffering on other than Christian terms proved unsustainable.

Barnard believes that Keats, still misconceiving his own genius, did not recognize the major achievements of the Odes to Psyche, on a Grecian Urn, and to a Nightingale, since he seems to turn upon them with a sort of disgust in the Ode on Indolence. But of course a poet who had set his sights on writing Drydenesque or Chaucerian or Ovidian narratives could not easily recognize the Odes, with their avowed and apparent subjectivity, as anything but aberrant self-indulgences. And in any case a line like "Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone" is as outlandish, as little naturalized by spoken or written usage, as anything in *Endymion*. Barnard writes ardently of the "Ode to a Nightingale" in particular, and yet enthusiasts will still find him provokingly cool when he discusses the Odes. What he has in mind, which precludes for him any notion that Keats had achieved maturity before his death, is the lack of any significant overlap, in tone and diction, between Keats's poems and his letters. And it is surely true that, coming to the poems after



Canova's "Theseus and the Centaur", 1805-19, is reproduced from Sculpture: The adventure of modern sculpture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, by Antoinette Le Normand-Romain et al (307pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £30. 0 297 79046 3).

the letters, one is provoked to murmur, with Matthew Prior (and Falstaff), "Let us e'en talk a little like folks of this world". This will be indignantly repudiated by some as the voice of anti-Romantic prejudice. And who can deny that, whether by temperament or conditioning or both, some readers cleave to the poetry of the Romantic period as the tuning-fork for all poetry whatever, whereas others cannot do so? However that may be, the classic status of

Keats's poetry may be thought assured, in the sense that it's hard to imagine a time when numerous readers won't fall in love with it. For others of us, measuring him against his own masters (Dryden has been named, and may serve), this body of poetry will always seem more poignant than mastery. Of course the mastery will always be the last thing sought by those who want to master a text and its author, rather than be mastered by them.

Past and present, word and thing

Kate Flint

JOHN P. MCGOWAN
Representation and Revelation: Victorian realism from Carlyle to Yeats
206pp. Columbia: University of Missouri Press. £23.50.
08262 04929
RAYMOND CHAPMAN
The Sense of the Past in Victorian Literature
212pp. Croom Helm. £22.50.
07099 34416

"Words only mark a thing's absence", comments John P. McGowan, near the beginning of his excellent blend of deconstruction and historicism, *Representation and Revelation: Victorian realism from Carlyle to Yeats*. This Derridean truism is brought to bear on the Victorian passion for the medieval past as a time when the meaning of sensible appearances seemed readily available, when as Carlyle wished to believe, "Society was what we can call whole". Following Foucault's premise that at the end of the eighteenth century a revolutionary shift in European thought resulted in complete reassessment of the issue of representation, McGowan investigates how certain Victorian writers tried to connect mind with world, to "identify a 'reality' that exists prior to and independent of any thought and speech", and struggled to convince themselves, and their readers, of literature's ability to represent that "reality".

McGowan identifies the Victorian approach to the problems raised by an awareness of the gap between word and thing as a synthesis of empiricism — particularly Lockean — and Romantic theories of mind. The former is a representative theory of knowledge, positing the word as a necessary mediator between world and mind; the latter is revelatory, using

the word as symbol, as a direct and intuitive route to the merging of world and mind which constitutes an additional, conceptual model of reality. McGowan deals ably with the necessary qualifications voiced at the time to such simplistic attempts at schematization, although his assessment of Victorian thought on the representation of the real unaccountably plays down the importance of Shelley to Romantic-derived theories of language. He shows also how the Victorians had to grapple with contemporary attempts by empiricists and scientists to wrest the natural from the human, and with the increasing mechanization of culture. His choice of authors to illustrate the working out of these theoretical problems is largely predictable: Carlyle, Ruskin, Dickens, George Eliot, Robert Browning. He takes D. G. Rossetti's poetry as his starting-point, analysing it to show the intensity of the need to apprehend and understand reality, and the linguistic evasions which indicate this desire rather than the achievement of the task. Yeats is perhaps a more surprising, and less manageable, figure with whom to conclude, but he is seen as representative of an early Modernist acceptance of the existence of a set reality which cannot be changed or bound in by language, and which frustrates desire.

Representation and Revelation is a closely argued and stimulating study, although some of McGowan's individual points are questionable. While the overall examination of the contradictions involved in Dickens's separation of Fancy and the Real is persuasive, *Edwin Drood* alone is enough to contradict the idea that "Dickens never resorts to a historical myth of an ideal past". In the case of both Dickens and Eliot, he is perhaps too willing to suggest that difficulties caused by the inability of language to fit the world are at the root of the characters' (as opposed to the novelists') problems.

McGowan's analysis presupposes writers who were continually aware of the problems of moving between word, thing and concept. In stark contrast, Raymond Chapman's authors appear never to have suffered from such epistemological questioning. In *The Sense of the Past in Victorian Literature*, he presents the past as a much travelled and plundered country, in which the Victorians sought both nostalgic solace and ominous warnings. Without significantly distinguishing, until his final chapter, between one end of the reign and the other, he traces the way in which medievalism served both political and economic arguments about the necessity for individual rights, and simultaneously was a source for religious and romantic idealism. He shows, too, how the eighteenth century — particularly for Thackeray — seemed in some ways more elegant and polished than the nineteenth, yet was regrettably more corrupt and immoral. Many of his examples and arguments are familiar: Chapman is at his most interesting when considering the less well known, such as the High Anglican novel by Joseph Shorthouse, *John Inglesant*. Not only does he discuss the doctrinal points raised by this convoluted and melodramatic tale of interregnum royalist and religious liberalism, but he places it in relation to the jibes against Jesuits in Kingsley's *Westward Ho!*.

But Chapman projects on to his Victorian subjects his own desire for the past to be simple to read. "It may be conceded", he says of Thackeray, "that his work is marred by his failure to achieve the consistency either of an objective stance or of a single partisan view." Although in his introduction he acknowledges that the Victorians oscillated between optimism and anxiety, he never concedes that such inconsistencies as he remarks on in Thackeray may be the product both of complex and conflicting attitudes towards the past, and of the problems of figuring in language.

Metaphysical voyagers

David Nokes

WILLIAM GOLDING
Close Quarters
281pp. Faber. £9.95.
0571 147798.

"What a world a ship is! A universe!" declares Edmund Talbot mid-way through his narrative of *Close Quarters*, making explicit in a way scarcely necessary the extended metaphor that dominates William Golding's latest novel of nautical metaphysics. *Close Quarters* is the sequel to *Rites of Passage*, the second part of a projected trilogy whose final volume, to judge from Talbot's postscript, must already be written. This novel continues the story of the voyage of a ship full of emigrants bound for Australia in 1813. The cast of characters will be familiar to readers of *Rites of Passage*, with the omission only of the unfortunate James Colley whose self-immolation at the end of that book had such a chastening effect on Talbot, the priggish narrator.

Talbot spends most of the present volume in a kind of daze brought on by repeated blows to the head. He is forever tripping over frapping-sheets, blundering into bulkheads or being struck on the skull by descending yardarms. As a result his narrative, while retaining a precise and pedantic tone of nineteenth-century pastiche, is blotched and bleary. His ship-shape metaphors have an edge of desperation as they endeavour to cope with nightmarish apprehensions and storm-tossed visions. Even love afflicts Talbot like a blow on the head, causing him to reel and vomit like a madman. "Madam", he confesses, "I have been struck by a thunderbolt."

Talbot is not alone in his mental confusion.

In this ship of fools everyone is a little insane. Down in the hold the lugubriously ill-named sailing-master Mr Smiles observes: "There are ships, Mr Talbot, in which every man-Jack is mad, save one." Some are mad with fear as the ship threatens to break up in a storm; some are mad with grog, liberated from the hold to celebrate the ending of the war with France; some are mad with paregoric, a medicine become a poison. Others are mad with duty, jealousy or lust. Bound together on a doomed and leaking craft, Golding's voyagers are like a cast of literary archetypes, each one waiting to play his part in some great psychomachic drama.

Two ghosts haunt the novel, though often resolving themselves into one. The first is the ghost of Colley, hovering over the narrative as the ship lies becalmed on the ocean and green slime covers the hull like a disease. "Perhaps", Talbot speculates, "it was the unappetised 'larva' of Colley creeping about the ship like a filthy smell which was the 'motus' of our idiotic decline into phantasy." The other is the ghost of literature itself. Colley is clearly Golding's albatross, and throughout the novel muffled resonances from *The Ancient Mariner*, from *Moby-Dick* and from innumerable other seafaring years and mysteries turn this ship into a floating echo-chamber. From the first, Talbot presents himself as a self-conscious story-teller rather than merely the keeper of a ship's log. "I need a hero whose career I may follow in volume two", he writes, invoking the assistance of Fielding and Smollett. In fact the literary genius presiding over the first part of the novel is, somewhat paradoxically, Jane Austen. Talbot's ship and another vessel, the *Alecyone*, are slowly and helplessly drawn together by a force of magnetic attraction on the still and windless sea. The two ships become like two streets in one of Austen's vil-

lages. "The effect was of two streets side by side — we were a small township, or a village at least, a village out here in this desert wilderness." In the midst of this watery void Golding introduces a parodic vignette of English social life, with its visiting cards, ball-gowns and minor snobberies. Suddenly the subjects of conversation switch from gun-decks and grappling-irons to valses and quadrilles, silks and taffetas. As if re-arranging deck-chairs on the Titanic, the passengers dance and flirt while beneath them the green slime of Golding's symbolism spreads across the hull.

'As he steers us through the calms and storms, we are never quite sure whether we are in the safe hands of a master-mariner or under the dangerous spell of an Old Man of the Sea.'

As with most of Golding's fiction, it is impossible to escape a brooding, restless intensity which turns even the most trivial incident or observation into a metaphysical conceit. A deck is never just a deck, a hull never merely a hull. From bowsprit to poop and from bilge-pump to crow's-nest, his ship is a tightly rigged analogy for the human condition. Indeed, the ship becomes a living organism, a precarious embodiment of the uneasy relationship between human craft and the elements of nature. Twigs have been seen to sprout from the unseasoned timber down below. Walking on deck in his naked feet Talbot experiences a strange sensation. "It was true, good God! the planking was alive! There was a creeping and almost muscular movement." When ambitious young Lieutenant Benet proposes his daring scheme

to clear the weeds from the hull with a drag-rope, his practical remedy raises not just weeds but questions of faith. The vessel is now so frail that it may only be this parasitic growth which holds its fragile carcass together. In Talbot's nightmares, when the draglines are lowered over the side they trawl up a writhing accusatory mass of sea-monsters, Leviathans and severed heads.

The studied self-consciousness of Talbot's narrative style works as both an analogy and a disguise for Golding's own literary allusiveness. Talbot's craftsman-like prose offers a kind of parallel with the practice of seaman-ship: both seeking to subdue unruly forces by a system of rules and formulas. He is fascinated by nautical, or what he calls "Tarpaulin" terms, rediscovering, in their simple proverbial phrases, a forgotten thesaurus of human wisdom. When the ship is literally "taken aback" by the wind his main interest is not in the destruction of the mizzen-mast, but in seeing a dead metaphor brought back to life. "The last thing I remember thinking before I slept was what a wealth of unexpected experience had come to me through that simple phrase 'taken aback'." Golding, too, taking us back to the ostensibly simple form of a nineteenth-century narrative, seeks to reinvest the stereotypes of seafaring fiction with darker, more ambiguous values. As a story-teller his touch never falters. His attention to details of idiom and setting show a reverence for his craft that would do credit to a master-shipwright. It is in the dark undertow of his metaphors and in the literary ostentation of his allusions that a feeling of strain and contrivance appears. As he steers us through the calms and storms, we are never quite sure whether we are in the safe hands of a master-mariner or under the dangerous spell of an Old Man of the Sea.

Mythical adventurers

Clive Sinclair

CHARLES NEIDER
Overflight
218pp. New Horizon. \$14.95.
083282 0265

Charles Neider's *Beyond Cape Horn: Travels in the Antarctic*, published six years ago and reviewed by me in the TLS of October 9, 1981, was a handsome book, full of beautiful observations, but it was also marked by a certain coldness that had nothing to do with the terrain. It was, as it were, too polite, as if Neider felt that revealing the secrets of Antarctica would somehow be unmannerly. This restraint, I may add, was hardly unconscious; at several moments Neider was tempted to throw restraint to the wind and bare his soul, but each time he held back. He did so for fear of embarrassment, but also for fear of death, as spontaneous gestures can be fatal in that inhospitable place. None the less, at the end of the review I dared Neider to "doff his parka and take the plunge", not into the tempting but icy waters he described, but into the world of mystery. In effect I was saying, "Write a novel about the place." Well, he has done so and I feel a certain responsibility to the book. Certainly it would be bad manners to ignore it.

Reading *Overflight* makes you very aware of your behaviour. Indeed, behaviour in *extremis* — of men and machines, and the elements — is the novel's theme. "And I must behave well", muses Joel Stevenson, historian of the cold South and *Overflight's* narrator. "This, in the end, was what it was about, my having come to Antarctica." To be sure, he has reason enough to behave badly, having just survived his second crash on the slopes of Mt Erebus, a massive active volcano — very active, as it turns out.

Of the first, DC 10 Kiwi from New Zealand carrying 249 passengers and crew, he was the sole survivor. That crash was the consequence of arrogance, of putting absolute faith in the perfect behaviour of man-made machinery; thus it was the empty radar screen that was believed, rather than Stevenson's accurate prediction that they were on a collision course with Mt Erebus. It is true that Neider subsequently offers a scientific explanation for the phenomenon of the empty screen, but the final impression he wants to convey is that the ingenious plane and its trusting crew had been lured to destruction by the indigenous mountain, whose name becomes increasingly significant. To sustain this suspicion Neider has to enter a post-realist mode. It is his big test, just as the second accident is Stevenson's.

Pricked by guilt over his escape and the fact

that he may have behaved badly by slipping into survival gear instead of warning the other passengers, Stevenson agrees to scatter the ashes of two of the latter over the crash site. It is while *en route* to the first wreck that the second, climactic, downing occurs. McIver, the pilot, is to blame. This is no real surprise, for we have been told that he "might be soft physically". Neider has a disconcerting habit of describing people in terms of their muscle tone, which owes more to Hemingway's equation of physique and morality than to his own sceptical evaluation of perfection. Fortunately, when the crunch comes, Neider's literary skills assert themselves over this predilection for muscular men and women. Thus the helicopter's first impact kills off the Revd Don Lynn, a very bicep Christian, demonstrating conclusively that neither brawn nor prayer will be sufficient to outwit Mt Erebus's primeval cunning.

Fearing the worst, Stevenson (named, incidentally, after America's last political giant) thinks,

"I'd died now I would have the satisfaction of knowing I had died fairly well. The glow that sustained me was the knowledge I was behaving decently, as far as I knew. This knowledge was the best gift I had, the best I could hope to bring down off Erebus."

In fact he brings down considerably more, for at this point Neider takes his courage in both

hands and does what McIver failed to do, he overleaps Erebus and enters the world of myth.

In a last effort to summon help, Stevenson attains the summit of the volcano, and there senses that his destiny is in the fire lake. In *Beyond Cape Horn* Neider was tempted to seek revelation in icy pools, now Stevenson, at the edge of the crater, feels that "something totally illuminating" is about to be revealed. Neider, of course, didn't take the leap, and neither does Stevenson. But, as I've said, the book does. Erebus, as you know, was that dark portion of the underworld that encompassed Hades, it was where that prototype traveller Odysseus encountered the shade of his mother; now it becomes both "the planetary anus spewing the fires of earth's indigestion" and the house of Stevenson's own ghosts. They come quite naturally into the strange world of ice and fire that Neider has brilliantly created; first his mother, lastly Captain Scott himself, who speaks as eloquently as any shadow ever did. Later, Stevenson (a historian, remember) seeks out the man who found Scott's body. He looked "haunted", he is told. As is Stevenson. Haunted by what? Erebus. A malign thing of deceptive beauty, a deadly magnet, a reminder of those mysterious forces that can still outwit the fittest bodies and the sharpest machines. Neider punishes man for his hubris, I praise him for his.

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Chock-a-block with wonders

Mark Abley

ANDRÉ THEVET
André Thetvet's North America: A 16th-century view
Translated by Roger Schlesinger and Arthur P. Stahler
292pp. Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press. \$37.50.
07735 05873

"It is not possible", André Thetvet once observed with regret, "for any man to see all things in his lifetime... but God has given us a way to be able to represent them." Thetvet built his career on effective representations; during the sixteenth century he was the royal cosmographer to four kings of France, as well as the overseer of the Royal Collection of Curiosities. He also served as a canon of Angoulême Cathedral and as a private chaplain to Catherine de Medici. Such eminence was made possible not by Thetvet's lineage—he was apparently of modest birth—but by his prowess as a cataloguer of geographical lore, some of it accurate. He published numerous works, including a so-called *Cosmographie universelle*, and he was tireless in his pursuit of good stories, many of them about the New World. André Thetvet's *North America* comes complete with a blurb that announces: "Professors Schlesinger and Stahler have now added Thetvet to the list of enjoyable books by early European explorers of North America."

They have done so much thing. André Thetvet is unlikely ever to have set foot on the continent of North America, unless the ship that brought him home in 1556 from a ten-week sojourn in Brazil made a brief stopover in Florida. He was never a man to be deterred by mere facts, however, and he subsequently described with some intimacy the areas we now call Newfoundland, Quebec, Florida, Mexico and Nicaragua. These descriptions, in a workmanlike translation by the late Arthur P. Stahler, make up the bulk of André Thetvet's *North America*. Their author's boldness far surpassed his veracity; by his own accounts, he spent the year 1550 variously travelling in the Levant, conversing with the explorer Jacques Cartier in Brittany, and voyaging in the New World. (The first or the second may be true; the third is not.) Even his contemporaries quickly saw through Thetvet: in 1578 Jean de Léry called him an impudent liar whose works were "vieux

hailons et Fripperies". Undeterred by criticism, Thetvet went on embroidering his ragged, long-winded texts until shortly before his death. He was incapable of leaving his own inventions alone.

Roger Schlesinger and Arthur Stahler have done their best by him, cutting judiciously and annotating copiously and, at moments, suggesting diffidently that Thetvet's accounts are of lasting interest: "This would appear to be the first recorded use of this place name...". Their summation of the man's writings betrays by its profusion of negatives the editors' own doubts: "if it were not for his insatiable curiosity and his not inconsiderable courage as a Renaissance tourist, a good many 'singularities' of the period would not be available to us today". Or else—as with the tale of the marooned Marguerite de Roberval, which Rabelais used to excellent effect but to Thetvet's annoyance—they would be available only in livelier fictions than his own.

Thetvet picked up his information both from published accounts and from his conversations with first-hand witnesses: explorers, fishermen, and possibly the native Canadians whom Cartier had taken back to France. The difficulty, now as always, is to distinguish the grains of

truth from Thetvet's considerable dough of fabrication and misunderstanding. When he writes of two great bears, "of which one was so old that he was as white as new snow", we can confidently attribute the colour to the bear's species rather than its age. When he discusses the possible existence of "a beast bearing a single horn on the forehead", we may wonder whether he was unwittingly alluding to the narwhal. But when he describes the customs of the Beothuk Indians of Newfoundland—a people who, like the aborigines of Tasmania, were ruthlessly hunted to extinction by British and Irish settlers—we have no way of discerning how accurate Thetvet's picturesque details might be.

His tetchiness, his repetitiveness, and his awkward use of the French language prevent his writings from having any great literary value. Yet André Thetvet's *North America* is of some interest, from a psychological standpoint. As inquisitive as he was credulous, he presents a world chock-a-block with wonders: a *terra nova* for the human imagination. His descriptions veer from fruits to religion, clothes to vocabulary, animals to climate, with no apparent order, purpose, or variation in the tenor of his own wide-eyed interest. Every

page has its digression, every paragraph is small oddity. His references to Aristotle and the Bible are conspicuous by their rarity, for Thetvet was a man whose imagination turned outward and forward. As such, he catches one of the dominant moods of the sixteenth century more sharply than do a great many of his writers. Even his glaring lack of consistency reveals something of the *Zeitgeist*. "The country is well populated," he writes, "the inhabitants peaceful and friendly and the most obliging you could see." Four paragraphs later, those same inhabitants have become "the fiercest known people... always occupied in warring with some of their neighbours". He had the sort of mind that not only tolerates contradictions but positively embraces them.

Thetvet's audience, too, was presumably avid for marvels. His counterparts in our century are men such as Thor Heyerdahl and Jacques Cousteau, whose reports on their expeditions still retain the quality of personal adventure; and also, perhaps, such writers as Erich von Däniken and Emmanuel Vajda, whose pleasures reading whom are contingent upon our willing suspension of disbelief. Thetvet had something of their stubborn singularity and something, too, of their vanity: he named two non-existent islands, one in each hemisphere, after himself.

His editors have laboured efficiently over his sometimes recalcitrant prose, searching out the geographical references and the literary sources with an impressive perseverance. Some forty pages of Thetvet's *Grand Inconnu* are published here for the first time in their original language. What the editors have mostly failed to sketch is the historical and political context in which Thetvet worked. Although Cartier and the Sieur de Roberval had succeeded in introducing France to a new continent, they had not managed to discover a north-west passage to Asia, an abundance of gold and silver, or a land they deemed suitable for colonization. In the 1550s the Portuguese repulsed French efforts to gain a commercial foothold in Brazil; in the 1560s, the Spanish coolly disposed of a French settlement in Florida. Thetvet wrote in a time of defeat, several decades before Samuel de Champlain finally planted a permanent French colony in North America soil, and he deserves some credit for keeping France's interest in the New World alive. His country's ventures had met with failure; Thetvet maintained his open-minded, open-eared, open-mouthed position.



"Niagara Falls from Above", a watercolour by Thomas Dayles, c.1766; it is reproduced from *Views and Visions: American landscape painting before 1830* (311pp. Washington DC: The Corcoran Gallery of Art. Paperback, \$22.95. 0 88675 022 9), the catalogue to an exhibition held earlier this year.

Vinland findings

James Graham-Campbell

ANNE STINE INGSTAD and HELGE INGSTAD
The Norse Discovery of America
Two volumes, 460pp and 574pp. Oxford University Press/Oslo: Norwegian University Press. £75 (£37.50 each volume).
02 0007 5621

These handsome volumes document and celebrate the remarkable discovery by the Norwegian Helge Ingstad of the only known Viking-age Norse settlement in North America, excavated under the direction of his wife, Anne Stine Ingstad.

In 1953, Ingstad explored the Norse settlements in Greenland, telling the story in *Land Under the Polar Star* (1959; English edition, 1966). The conclusions he drew from his researches led him to make eight more expeditions to Newfoundland in the belief that Leif Eriksson and the other Norsemen who had discovered the New World in the late tenth century had had their headquarters in that region, known to them as Vinland—whereas it was more generally held that Vinland lay farther to the south. After systematic investigation in 1960 along the northern coasts of North America, Ingstad came to some overgrown house-sites in a place called L'Anse aux Meadows, at the northernmost tip of Newfoundland. He organized their excavation in 1961-8, only to have his initial claims that this was indeed the site of a 1,000-year-old Norse settlement greeted by considerable scholarly scepticism. However, as the factual evidence accumulated, all doubts were laid to rest, and

in 1978 the site received the accolade of being placed first on UNESCO's "World Heritage List" of the outstandingly important historical and natural monuments. Hence the celebratory atmosphere to these volumes, with their large format and lavish illustration, including the extensive use of colour (among the photographs is a particularly splendid, full-page polar bear).

Ingstad summarized the results of his 1960-8 expeditions in a popular account, *Westward to Vinland*, the first English edition of which was published in 1969. Volume Two of the present work is its natural successor, with Ingstad deploying much the same material in greater depth and with more detailed documentation. At its heart is his commentary on the two sagas—*Grœnlandinga saga* and *Eiríks saga rauða*—describing the Vinland voyages, accompanied by Gwyn Jones's translations of them, reprinted from his book *The Norse Atlantic Saga* (1964). To this are added sections on varied topics concerning geography and climate, ships and navigation, etc., together with a summary of the contents of Volume One which comprises the excavation report. There is a particularly welcome chapter on "Norse finds of special interest in Norway, Greenland and America", which gives a summary of recent discoveries.

Ingstad has by now convinced himself that "there can hardly be any doubt about the Norse settlement site at L'Anse aux Meadows being identical with Leif Eriksson's settlement (Leifsbúðir) in Vinland, of which *Grœnlandinga saga* tells". However, only recently Erik Wahlgren has argued the case, in *The Vikings and America*, for its having been the later col-

ony of Thorfinn Karlsefni (TLS, December 5, 1986). The fact remains that there is not sufficient evidence to permit us to connect any historical personages with the site.

Volume One is by Anne Stine Ingstad, with the help of an international team of collaborators who were involved with different aspects of the excavation and its aftermath. Together they describe and analyse the three Norse house-sites and their short-lived occupation, as well as their natural environment, and other features, including a smithy. This excavation report first appeared in 1977, but has been completely reset for its second edition. There are some corrections to the illustrations, but the only major textual revision involves the chapter by R. Nydal on radiocarbon dating. The mean date (with one standard deviation) arrived at ten years ago by the radiocarbon method was 920±30; this is now replaced by a recalibrated date of 990±30 or—15. There remains, however, the possibility that some of the dates used in this calculation have been derived from driftwood, thus giving a mean date earlier than that of the actual Norse occupation.

It is regrettable that the opportunity presented by a new edition was not more fully exploited. The report on the "multi-aboriginal occupations at the site" remains "preliminary". The key artefact—a bronze pin found in one of the houses—is still inadequately illustrated and discussed. Of deeper concern is the lack of reference to the further (as yet unpublished) excavations which took place in 1979-8, directed first by the Swedish archaeologist Bengt Schönbäck and then by Birgitta Walgren, for its having been the later col-

postscript by Arne Emil Christensen to his chapter on the "Test excavations of the boat-sheds". In the 1960s certain turf features were interpreted as forming four boat-sheds, set somewhat curiously, at an oblique angle to the shore, but observations in the 1970s have led to the suggestion (rejected by Christensen) that these might be natural in origin, created by storm erosion and redeposition.

There is thus much that remains to be told about L'Anse aux Meadows, including the evidence of new artefacts and new radiocarbon dates. It would not have detracted from the glory that is properly the Ingstads' for this to have been more clearly stated. Nevertheless, these volumes form a fitting monument to a major research project involving a unique archaeological discovery, placed firmly in its historical and geographical context.

The Great Explorers: The European discovery of America by Samuel Elliot Morison has recently appeared in paperback (752pp. Oxford University Press. £8.95. 0 19 540222 0). The book, which was first published in 1978, is an edition of material selected from two earlier titles, *The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages, AD 500-1800*, which appeared in 1971 (reviewed in the TLS, July 16, 1971), and *The Southern Voyages, 1492-1616, 1974* (reviewed in the TLS, December 20, 1974). The reviewer noted that "Admiral Morison has thoroughly digested all the printed and much manuscript material, and his previous writing on the history of these explorations. To these he has added his own special contributions, travelling along the explorers' routes to identify their named points."

Shaping a cult

Lucy Ellmann

JOHN REWALD
Cézanne, the Steins and their Circle
64pp. Thames and Hudson. £4.95.
0 500 55018 2

In this book, based on his 1986 Walter Neurath lecture, John Rewald scrutinizes the role of the Steins family as early proponents of Cézanne. After pursuing studies in biology and medicine in Baltimore, Leo and Gertrude Stein joined their brother Michael in Paris in 1903 and immediately began to investigate the mysteries of modern art. Gertrude was to become a famously esoteric and egocentric novelist, and Leo, who had already worked on Mantegna, ended up as an art critic. When Leo asked Bernard Berenson if there were any living French artists worthy of note, he was sent, Gertrude in tow, to Ambroise Vollard, the Parisian dealer who owned a vast and to some extent secret supply of works by Cézanne. The two siblings bought landscapes and still lifes (usually two at a time) and it was not long before Leo was selling all his Japanese prints in order to buy Cézanne's portrait of his wife.

Professor Rewald thinks this picture influenced Picasso a few years later when he sat below it painting Gertrude. The Steins' apartment at 27 rue de Fleurus certainly became a Mecca for the artists and connoisseurs who were trooping to Paris at this time. The chaotically juxtaposed Manets, Cézannes, Picassos and Matisse, all half-hidden behind Bohemian upholstery and the sometimes haphazard hypotheses of their owners, were a revelation. Having acquired more paintings by Cézanne than the Musée du Luxembourg, Leo might well have felt justified in his chosen role of propagating the Cézanne cult at Stein soirées. He spoke impressively, and to an often hostile audience, of Cézanne's "unceasing effort to

force the form to reveal its absolute self-existing quality of mass", and thus had some hand in spreading the growing feeling that Cézanne had changed the course of painting. To express the impact of Cézanne, Leo repeatedly compared him to Michelangelo, which may well have stirred Berenson's more memorable comparison of the painter to Piero della Francesca. Both painters, Berenson said, attended to bulk and ignored physical perfection.

At this high point in the early history of Cézanne's reputation, the personalities of his patrons intervened detrimentally. Michael remained a faithful supporter of Matisse, but Rewald finds Leo and Gertrude fickle, Leo tiring of his own theories and Gertrude tiring of Leo in favour of Alice B. Toklas. Despite the influence of their taste on artists of the time, particularly on Americans, Rewald chides them too for not recording the reactions of Picasso and Matisse to their first glimpse of the Cézannes. He quotes as an alternative Max Weber's account of Matisse's espousal of the painter; although Matisse could only afford a small "Bathers", his Cézanne propaganda, at his art school in Paris, was inevitably of greater significance than all the laudatory efforts, backed up by liquid assets, of Leo.

What Gertrude did remember about these transition years, between art since the Renaissance and art since Cézanne, can be found in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, and many of Leo's thoughts on Cézanne were eventually published in *The ABC of Aesthetics* (unavailable now in Britain). But by 1914, fed up with Cézanne and dismayed by Picasso's "foolishness" (Cubism), Leo recognized that his services to the avant-garde were no longer required and returned to America to undergo psychoanalysis. He sold the Cézannes one by one, and yet his final description of Cézanne as "for me more completely the squeezed lemon than any other artist" may be more of a tribute than Rewald suggests.

On the grand scale

Amanda Hopkinson

VICKI GOLDBERG
Margaret Bourke-White: A biography
427pp. Heinemann. £22.
0 434 28800 X

Margaret Bourke-White established herself as a photographic legend, an identity she keenly fostered in her lifetime and one which her death (in 1971, after a long struggle against Parkinson's disease) has done nothing to diminish. She attacked life and work—in her case the two were inseparable—with a voracious appetite for excitement and success, and made her name as a photojournalist with the first cover of *Life* magazine (showing the Fort Peck Dam) in 1936.

In a book that relies much more on words than pictures, Vicki Goldberg offers a detailed exploration of the origins of Bourke-White's desperation for success, her plan of action for achieving it, and the mixture of fortuitous timing and sheer hard work from which it came. Not even her rare failures could be allowed to obscure the myth. From having graduated as an official campus photographer, via the promotion of major new industrial companies, to working for advertising agencies, Bourke-White began to photograph people (as opposed to using them to lend scale to the majesty of a new technological age) when she visited the Soviet Union in 1932. In this, she was reversing the course more commonly followed by women since the beginning of photography, of starting by taking pictures of their families and only later—if at all—moving into the wider world.

Bourke-White made a point of physical attractiveness—she took her camera down stairs, up in cranes and aeroplanes—and of being as unlike any female predecessor as possible. Such ambition predictably provoked extreme reactions. *Life* colleagues carped about "the lady with the back and call"; "she acts like a queen... you begin to think she is a queen". Publicly at least, fellow photographers were obliged to moderate jealousy with admiration: Bourke-White reported that

Stieglitz had called her "one of the world's great artists" and Eisenstadt wrote that "People were in awe of her. Her name was magical. She was a star during a great era in photography." According to Goldberg he added, "Nobody liked her... She overlooked other people." And Walker Evans was the first of several who derided her books on the American South as "overly emotional... ultimately superficial".

The ability to use others, while important to her early success, compromised her sense of humanity. In a 1936 interview (unfortunately not included here) she outlined what she was still looking for:

War. I want to start with the starving children and the war-widowed women back home. Then sinking ships at sea... battles in the trenches and in the sky. That sequence may make folks see just how horrible war is and then perhaps I shall have done my little bit towards ending wars for all time.

She got her shipwreck (off North Africa) and her aerial bombardments (air raids over Bologna and Moscow). She was one of the first journalists to enter the concentration camps at Erla and Buchenwald, and was the eighth *Life* reporter to cover the Korean conflict.

Like many of the world leaders and experts whom she photographed, Bourke-White saw things on a grand scale. She intended to appeal to the conscience of the world—which for her was the Western world—and this was her reference point. While she surveyed the ragged individuals facing her camera, her mind's eye was on the millions of *Life* readers back home. In the beginning Bourke-White considered people as simply props in her iconography of the machine age; then she went in pursuit of great names, the embodiments of temporal or spiritual power, and latterly her work came more and more to depict individuals as insignificant before the panorama of history.

Goldberg's biography is strongest in its thorough research into the photographer's own records and letters as well as on testimonies from those who knew her. To obtain even a partial idea of Bourke-White's work, however, it is also necessary to refer to her own books on Russia and on the Southern States as well as to subsequent exhibition catalogues.

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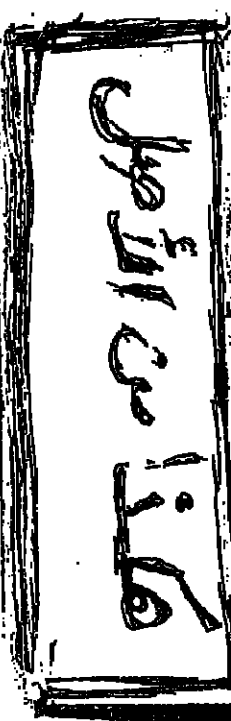
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JASON BERRY, JONATHAN FOOSE and TAD JONES
Up from the Cradle of Jazz: New Orleans music since World War II
272pp. University of Georgia Press. \$35 (paperback, \$15.95).
0 8203 0853 6

On June 25, 1949, the phrase "rhythm and blues" replaced "race recordings" in *Billboard* magazine. It was also the year that Antoine Domino, aged twenty-one, recorded "The Fat Man" in the back of Cosimo Matassa's music shop in New Orleans. The song made Domino's name. It shot to number six in the R and B charts; over the next five years, with each new record, he edged closer to the white market. Finally, in May 1955, "Ain't That a Shame" made the *Billboard* "Hot 100". Fats Domino was the first New Orleans rhythm and blues artist to break into the white charts. His most productive years, 1955 to 1963, coincide with the heyday of the genre which originated in New Orleans in 1949.

1949 was also the year that Herb Abramson and Ahmet Ertegun, youthful owners of the fledgling Atlantic Records, went talent-scouting in New Orleans. They had heard about a popular piano player called Professor Longhair and set out to find him. They managed to obtain the name of a club he was playing in a suburb called Algiers, but the cab driver refused to take them all the way "because that's niggertown". They eventually arrived at the

honky-tonk in question and found seats behind the piano. Ertegun remembers.

Fess was sitting there with the microphone between his legs. He had a drumhead attached to the piano which he hit with his right foot while he was playing. He made a percussive sound, very loud. He was playing the piano and singing full blast and it really was the most incredible sounding thing I ever heard. It was one of the most primitive dancehalls I'd ever seen, people jammed in there dancing and this wild thing going on and they hid us in a corner there and we were listening to the music. I thought "My God, we've really found an original, no white man has ever heard this man." So as soon as he finished, Herb and I, very excited, said, "Look, we have to tell you, we're just astounded by your playing and we want very much to record you." "Oh, what a shame," said Fess. "I just signed with Mercury."

This story catches in pristine, ecstatic form the musical infatuation that was to befall so many white youths in the years to come, myself included. "Up from the Cradle of Jazz" we all were in a sense, and ripe for the next thing, the wholesale theft of the music by whites and the beginning of long years of obscurity and poverty for some black musicians such as Roy Byrd (Professor Longhair). But of course this was something we knew nothing about then and it was to be long years before we found out.

This scholarly and wide-ranging book, written by three friends, covers the period from 1949 to the present. At the same time it provides a necessary historical perspective on the New Orleans musical families, their roots and their Caribbean, African and in particular, their Indian, connections. Before the war, New Orleans's musical reputation had rested largely on jazz. In the middle decade of this

century, rhythm and blues emerged as the new popular idiom, a mixture of blues and gospel, jazz, swing, Afro-Cubano and hillbilly music. It was a less personal form of expression than the older, rural blues, but it was destined to travel far.

Against the pattern of heavy migration to Chicago by black musicians from Kansas City, Memphis and the delta, the musical families of New Orleans tended to stay put, on account of the long musical tradition and the strongly competitive spirit between the city's different wards. New Orleans was always music. As long ago as 1830, with a population of only 40,000, it already had three opera companies, including the Negro Philharmonic. Brass bands played French martial music (except for a short period under Spain, the city was French until the Louisiana Purchase in 1803), symphony orchestras played polkas, Germanic waltzes and French quadrilles. There was a history of free black musicians, mostly Catholic, but slaves too played and danced. Tavern owners could be arrested for letting slaves celebrate on the premises, so they danced in the streets and the tradition of street festivals was born.

The root of New Orleans rhythm and blues is in the sound of the marching bands and their followers. It is called "second line" music, the name given to the wave of marching dancers who engulf the brass bands and trail after them, moving to the beat. The New Orleans sound is distinctive: percussive piano rhythm, vocally suggestive horns and a parade-time backbeat on drums. In the case of Professor Longhair it was the movement of dancing feet translated to piano, a sizzling left hand playing boogie-woogie stride to which he added, if such is possible to imagine, a mixture of mambo, rumba and Calypso.

Anyone who bought Ernie K. Doe's 1961 record "Mother-in-law" will have a rough idea of what the New Orleans sound is - or Lee Dorsey's "Ya-Ya" of the same year. Dorsey was the first New Orleans musician to be signed by Marshall Schorn, who went on to form Seasaint Studios and Sansu Records with Allen Toussaint - the producer of hit records for Paul Simon, John Mayall, Taj Mahal, Joe Cocker, Paul McCartney, as well as Lee Dorsey and The Meters. The story of these two partners - the white business man and the black keyboard player and producer and the many hit records they turned out from the 1960s through to the 1980s, is virtually the

history of New Orleans rhythm and blues in its most public and successful form. But there is another side to success. To read that Pat Domino lives on Marais St in the lower Ninth Ward in a big white brick house trimmed in pink and yellow, topped by a roof of lavender terra-cotta tiles imported from Italy, that he has eight children - all their names begin with an "A" like his own - and that whenever he travels abroad he carries trunks filled with top-plates and cooking gear along with the musical equipment, warms the heart for him. But Berry, Foose and Jones tell a sadder story of the fate of Professor Longhair. In 1970, the British journalist Mike Leadbitter visited New Orleans and went to look for the pianist. He found him on South Rampart St sweeping out the One Stop Record Store.

Rhythm and blues (rock and roll by another name) was New Orleans's musical gift to the world in the 1950s and 60s. The moment is now over. There is a jazz revival going on down there. Sons whose fathers played funk and whose grandfathers played jazz are playing jazz again. Wynton and Branford Marsalis, two young brothers from a New Orleans jazz family, are in the forefront of the East Coast jazz revival. Brass bands are playing again. When I was there two years ago I went to see The Dirty Dozen Brass Band, mentioned here as "the eighties' most exciting brass band". They were playing in a small room called The Glass House in a distant black part of town. We were advised to park outside the door if we wanted to find our car again. Inside the mirrored room, black men and women were prowling round with beers, everyone excited. The band came on with their instruments and simply stood at one end of the room. The drummers too, bass and snare, played standing up, their drums round their necks. No wires, no microphones, no monitors. Then they started to play. Across fast traditional forms came astonishing, long and complicated arrangements, apparently memorized, like hectic bebop solos played in unison and at top speed, the whole thing driven along by the pumping tuba of Kirk Joseph, the band's leader. This was a concept in jazz and a sensation new to me. Listening to brass is not like listening to electric music and the experience cannot be as easily reproduced on disc. The air from the instrument plays a part. It seems to affect the pressure in the room. We felt that we were being lifted bodily out of our seats. We felt as if the tops of our heads were being blown off.

The Green Party

When the invite came I wasn't sure
Why I'd been asked. Who gave them my name?
And what did they stand for? There was,
I'd noticed in the streets, some stirring
Of the Easter lily, tucked furtively
Behind the lapel, like a pioneer pin
Before the social. Could that be it?

Everybody who was anyone was there
When I arrived, from Kavanagh expounding
The mystery of grass, to Donovan
Still harping on treachery. But who
Was the man in the hat, taking all in,
His sherry untouched? Eyes over shoulders,
Couldn't escape each other quick enough.

I too wanted out before the business
Started; but doors were closed. Two hours later,
Speeches finished, nothing was settled and I
None the wiser. The mixture as before:
Mushrooms, mushrooms, mushrooms. According to some
The heady whiff of the inch down by the river
As the clouds built up to the westward.

I'll tell you this much: when they take to the streets
They needn't think that I'll be falling in
Behind their primitive, vegetable cause.

BERNARD O'DONOGHUE

On bicycle and podium

Donald Mitchell

GUSTAV MAHLER
Mahler's Unknown Letters
Edited by Herta Blaukopf
Translated by Richard Stokes
241pp. Gollancz. £25.
0575 03644 3

The title of this fascinating volume gives little indication of the richness of its contents. After reading the letters through, we know a lot more about Mahler than we did before: we are reminded time and time again of his extraordinary personality, of the almost manic intensity with which he lived his life and his music. The Mahler story and the totality of his oeuvre are now so familiar to us that we can easily forget how short his life was - born 1860, died 1911 - and how much music and musical activity were crammed into barely three decades. All this, these letters call back to mind in the most vivid way, whether it is music or daily life that Mahler is writing about. We find him, for example, in June 1895, in a letter to Hermann Behn, bothering very precisely about his bicycle. In the spring of that year he had taken to cycling with conspicuous enthusiasm:

Still no trace of my bicycle! It's a particularly hard blow for me, since I am suffering again from my old complaint (haemorrhoids), which makes everything difficult, and as I know from my Hamburg days, cycling would be the best remedy.

Dear friend, please find out how things stand. If no delivery date was given when the bicycle was registered, it might be advisable to inquire at the station dispatch office to see where the bicycle actually is and to give instructions for it to be sent here by express freight.

An odd treatment for haemorrhoids one might think, and it was certainly not for this reason alone that Mahler committed himself to what he quaintly described as an obsessive need "to ride velocipede". His bicycle was also a means of access to landscape and people: Kurt Blaukopf tells us that when Mahler visited Brahms at Ischl, in the summer of 1896, he was on his bicycle. In a letter to Wilhelm Zime (another cycling enthusiast), also from 1895, we find that same spirited meticulousness with which Mahler approached musical affairs:

I have still not decided on a bicycle, and would not like to do so before asking your opinion. I have heard that English bicycles ("Premier" for ex.) only cost 20 marks etc. Could you perhaps call on me on Sunday morning, if that is convenient? Or else you could tell me where and when I can meet you. It's a matter of urgency for me, otherwise I'll forget everything I've learnt!

Mahler's insistent, inquisitive, nagging, exasperating personality leaps out of excerpts like these. But it is not only charming, amusing and enlightening biographical illuminations that the letters bring us. There are often nuggets of information which confirm with the immediacy of which only a letter can have the sometimes remarkably ad hoc assembly of movements in the earlier symphonies, of the Second especially. Of course we have known for a long time that "Ulrich", the setting of a *Wunderhorn* text, pre-existed the symphony and was incorporated into it at a later stage. But in a letter to Behn, again from 1895, we have the chronology of the incorporation in Mahler's own words:

I must send [Marie Götz, the mezzo-soprano] the Ulrich immediately; please return to me by express (nearest to be delivered at night) my piano score which I sent you recently via your dear wife... please bear in mind that my "piano score" was the original version of the work (the song), before I knew whether it would orchestrate it and include it in the Symphony.

The letters to Behn, a lawyer and gifted musician who died in 1927, are among the most valuable in the book (they are edited and introduced by Friedrich C. Heller). In them, for the most part, life and art are inextricably entangled. We encounter, for instance, the flustered composer who has absent-mindedly left behind him in Hamburg what he desperately needs on holiday at Steinbach:

Just imagine, I've left the sketches for the 1st movement of my 3rd in my desk. I'm in utter despair. I beg you to go immediately to Hamburg. I enclose the two keys to my desk. Look in one of the compartments on the right side and you'll find a bundle of papers wrapped in manuscript paper marked: "Drafts" or "Sketches" or something similar. Please do this with-

out delay and send it me by express! I can do nothing better I have this... Wire me as soon as you receive this letter, to tell me if I can count on you!

Mahler could, naturally. It is one of the characteristics of genius to find those indispensable friends who will function just as Behn functioned on this occasion: he located the sketches and got them off to Mahler, prompting a grateful reply which at the same time disclosed how real the need was:

Those few sheets were all that I needed - perhaps you thought it hardly worth the search. But they contain, dear Hermann, the entire embryo of the first movement.

(We may care to remind ourselves that the first movement of the Third, complete, plays for some 35 minutes.)

There are not only unforgettable glimpses of Mahler the composer but also of Mahler the



conductor. Here, in a letter from 1905, he is giving good advice to Oskar Fried, who was to undertake a performance of the Second in Berlin:

In particular I draw your attention to the great Last Trump, which must be rehearsed in good time in one or two special sessions.

{ 4 of stage horns
4 of stage trumpets
bass drum
1 [flute]
Piccolo }

in the orchestra so that the orchestral players can dispense with the bent. As for the positioning of players, I can recommend the arrangement which I once approved of and which several of the players will certainly recall.

(Mahler had conducted the work himself in Berlin on December 13, 1895.)

No surprise that it was about this passage in the finale of the Second that Mahler wrote to Fried (a section edited by Rudolf Stephan). Its innovative exploration of acoustic space and unmeasuredness brought problems of ensemble in their train. A challenging and striking concept in the 1890s and one that even today's conductor, equipped with TV monitors and so forth, can find a testing experience. The technology, of course, can help. But it can also deprive us and the players of that element of risk essential to Mahler's arresting drama for woodwind, brass and percussion which uniquely combines fanfares and free bird-song unimpeded by bar lines.

Mahler admired Fried as a Mahler interpreter (of the Second Symphony especially), which is more than can be said for his opinion of Nikisch, who had performed the *Kindertotenlieder* in Berlin in 1905. Mahler had heard that Nikisch "didn't look at the work before-hand and... rehearsed it sketchily", and wrote to Fried:

My God, we must all be prepared for such things... And on the other hand there are such evenings as yours and such people as you - a ray of hope in one's life, which must compensate for everything. I still cherish that evening. Perhaps you will think I still cherish these words from the grave still be able to rescue these words from the grave where Nikisch hurled them (together with the Vih) some time ago.

In another letter to Fried, probably a year later, Mahler touches on his Jewishness. Fried had hoped for a permanent position at Frankfurt and had been disappointed, and Mahler wrote to console him:

Always bear my own example in mind, for I'm all too familiar with that sort of thing. I have, after all, been counterpoised by obstacle upon obstacle in pursuit of the ideal - and that has required me to find a modus vivendi with the wretches. And don't forget that we can do nothing about our being Jewish, our chief mistake. We must merely try to moderate a little those superficial aspects of our nature which really do disturb, and to give way as little as possible on important matters. I hope that all will turn out for the best - don't lose heart!

"Being Jewish, our chief mistake" - an ironic phrase that haunts the mind and surfaces very uncomfortably indeed when one reads through the letters to Cosima Wagner, a section of the correspondence admirably introduced by Eduard Reeser, who reminds us of Felix Mottl's reply to Cosima's report of how impressed Bayreuth's senior administrator, Adolf Grossmann, had been by a performance of *Rienzi* at Leipzig under Mahler. "Everyone has told me how very gifted he is," said Mottl, "but he is unfortunately a Jew." It was a "mistake" which meant that the greatest Wagner interpreter of his time was never invited to conduct at Bayreuth.

Mahler would have been aware of these sentiments, naturally, though he would not have known what Cosima wrote in a letter to Marie von Wolfenstein when he was rehearsing a production at Vienna of an opera by her son Siegfried, *Der Bärenhäuter*. "I am witnessing in Vienna a strange conflict: Mahler and Richter, the Jew and the German. The conflict represents in miniature what is happening on a grand scale in our world: the casualness of the German means that the Jew - if one is to be just - appears the more worthy. It is Mahler who is staging *Der Bärenhäuter*."

One tends to read into these exchanges and comments the appalling hindsight that is ours, and was not Mahler's - the holocaust of the 1940s. One is happy to think that for him the possibility of that unfortunate "mistake" bearing such hideous consequences would have been beyond the reach of his imagination. But it is our consciousness of the upshot of those attitudes made so objectionably manifest in Cosima that makes the reading of these letters so unsettling. There is Cosima, on the one hand - and at least on the surface - polite enough, perhaps seriously admiring of Mahler (in part), and certainly anxious to do the best she could for her son with Mahler who, Jewish or not, was Director of the Vienna Opera and thus to be approached with appropriate circumspection; and on the other, Mahler himself, whose admiration for Wagner was boundless, who was conscious of the great, and indeed for him too, sacred tradition that Bayreuth embodied, and who seems to us now to go beyond the call of duty in the obliging and even deferential tone he adopted in his letters to Wagner's widow. And could he really have esteemed Siegfried's talent quite as highly as some of his fulsome words suggest? Not even Cosima was able to persuade him to take an interest in any opera of Siegfried's apart from *Der Bärenhäuter*.

Perhaps what we witness in the Cosima/Mahler relationship was a kind of elaborate power game, played out according to the rules of the day by two very influential people on the Austro-German musical scene. The rules were savagely to alter; and it is our knowledge that the game was to become lethal that lends a nightmarish quality still to the exchange of in-

stitutionalized pleasantries and (on Cosima's side) ritual insults.

There is no denying the interest of the Cosima Wagner section, but one cannot honestly claim to enjoy it. The letters to Emil Gutmann, however - he was the impresario who stage-managed the first performance of the Eighth Symphony in Munich in 1910 - are not only highly interesting but also invigorating. The letters show Mahler in top form, as here, in March 1910, when he can have left Gutmann in no doubt that he intended to have his way about the organization of the event:

Immediately after the performance I leave for Rome (where I remain until the 8th before returning to Vienna); it is therefore imperative for you to spend at least an afternoon in Paris, so that we can discuss everything at our leisure. But I implore you, now and in the future: dispense with all foolish committees and (utterly superfluous) publicity. You don't need a committee to give a concert. I detest all that and feel myself prostituted by such nonsense. When I arrive in Europe I shall either feel satisfied with the way things are going musically - in which case we can proceed without your Barnum and Bailey methods - or I shall not be satisfied, in which case I shall cancel the performance immediately and definitively! (You know me well enough to believe me.) In any case, it is better if fewer words are wasted over it. And once again - no committee! I object to all that sort of thing!

A marvellous letter; and no doubt Mahler's peremptory rejection of "all foolish committees" reflects his unhappy experience in New York, where he had been plagued by committees, and especially by Ladies' Committees, powerful then as they are still.

But - or as Cosima might have put it "if one is to be just" - Gutmann's task was (literally) an enormous one, a spectacle as well as a musical event, and one certainly leaves this section with warm admiration for his accomplishments and organizing abilities. Best of all, the editor of the letters (Peter Revers) includes Gutmann's own account of the premiere of the Eighth, "Gustav Mahler as Organizer" - a tribute from one organizer to another - brilliantly documenting the fierce attention Mahler brought to every detail of the performance, which became almost an independent work of art in its own right:

Mahler neglected nothing that he considered had a bearing on the audience's reception of the work. The grouping of his forces was very important to him, in order to make the unity of the work obvious to the eye as well; the loyal Roller did justice to his intentions by organizing the entire array of musicians into a most effective, architectonic structure. In addition, Mahler also arranged the lighting, and even managed to have the trams, which rattled along by the side of the Festhalle, proceed slowly and without ringing their bells, while the performances were in progress...

When Mahler stepped on to the conductor's rostrum in the semi-darkness of the vast hall, in which the black multitude of the audience merged with the black and white throng of the performers, everyone felt that a primeval, well-organized being, capable of life, was about to acquire a heart, which would now begin to beat. At this moment there were no singers, no audience, no instruments, no sounding-board - but one single body with many, many veins and nerves, waiting for the blood and breath of art to bring them to life.

Gutmann has a firm place in the history of the performance of Mahler's music. It is also an honourable one.

It was not only in performances of his own music that Mahler busied himself creatively with every detail. Moreover, the degree of attention did not alter, whether it was Mozart

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Waltzing, watching, wife-hunting

Jonathan Keates

HERMANN PÜCKLER-MUSKAU
Pückler's Progress: The adventures of Prince Pückler-Muskau in England, Wales and Ireland as told in letters to a former wife, 1826-9
Translated by Flora Brennan
254pp. Collins. £15.
0002176319

The appearance in 1830 of Hermann von Pückler-Muskau's *Briefe eines Verstorbenen* was brilliantly timed. Not merely did the author receive what was rumoured to be the highest sum paid to any German author except Goethe, but he gained in addition the plaudits of the old *Geheime Rat* himself, fanning the embers of his anglophobia with praise of Pückler as "unprejudiced", "right-minded" and "decent". A truly international fame garlanded the book from Boston to Constantinople, and the prince, a genuine Baron Hardup faced with apparently irredeemable ruin, was rescued overnight by his four sprightly and opinionated volumes.

Accompanied by extracts from Goethe's review, the English translation by Sarah Austin (who indulged an epistolary *amitié amoureuse* with the author) was greeted with indignation by the critics. At the prince's cavalier references to the more dubious aspects of our domestic life the *Edinburgh Review* seethed: "The ignorance and audacity of it (from a German, too, of all people) are inconceivable"; while the *Quarterly*, fuming over his delineation of our brutal love-making, exclaimed: "We hope the Lady Janes and the Lady Marys, who waltzed and galloped with 'this thoroughly illustrious prince' - their fathers whose wines he drank - and their brothers whose horses he rode - will not forget this passage."

As successful here as it was on the Continent, the book in its latest English version is patently repeating its former triumphs. (The present edition of the letters is not complete and Flora Brennan's introduction is far less informative than E. M. Butler's in "A Regency Visitor" (1957), but Butler, using the Austin version, omitted Pückler's Irish tour altogether, while Brennan is the first to include the relevant passages on his fruitless search for a wife.) Its undiminished popularity is not hard to explain. Where other travellers to England had been content to make polite footnotes, Pückler was determined to relish everything to the full and to speak as he found.

He was, after all, an adventurer. Contemporary readers were not to guess that the object of his journey had been to procure a rich wife who could secure him in his sovereign territory in Upper Lusatia, bale him out of his crippling debts and ultimately reunite him with Lucie von Pappenheim, the consort to whom these letters were addressed. Various referred to as Schnucke or Lou, she seems to have taken her husband's infidelities for granted, united as they both were in a sentimental bond thoroughly typical of the age of Kleist and Kotzebue.

His English public, knowing nothing of this, could still, as Sarah Austin warned him, feel "rage, scorn and disgust" at the general tone of Pückler's observations. A modern reaction is more likely to be one of astonishment at his coolness and self-assurance, or at his mercurial gift for assuming whatever role the hour demanded of him. At one moment, drinking Schnucke's health from a cow-horn on the top of Snowdon ("the champagne cork flew almost 4,000 feet above sea level") he is not unlike Ferdinand dashing off the poisoned lemonade in Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*, at another, energetically wife-hunting among the gem-bedecked heiresses at Brighton, he has strolled into the silver-fork world of Praed and Mrs Gore.

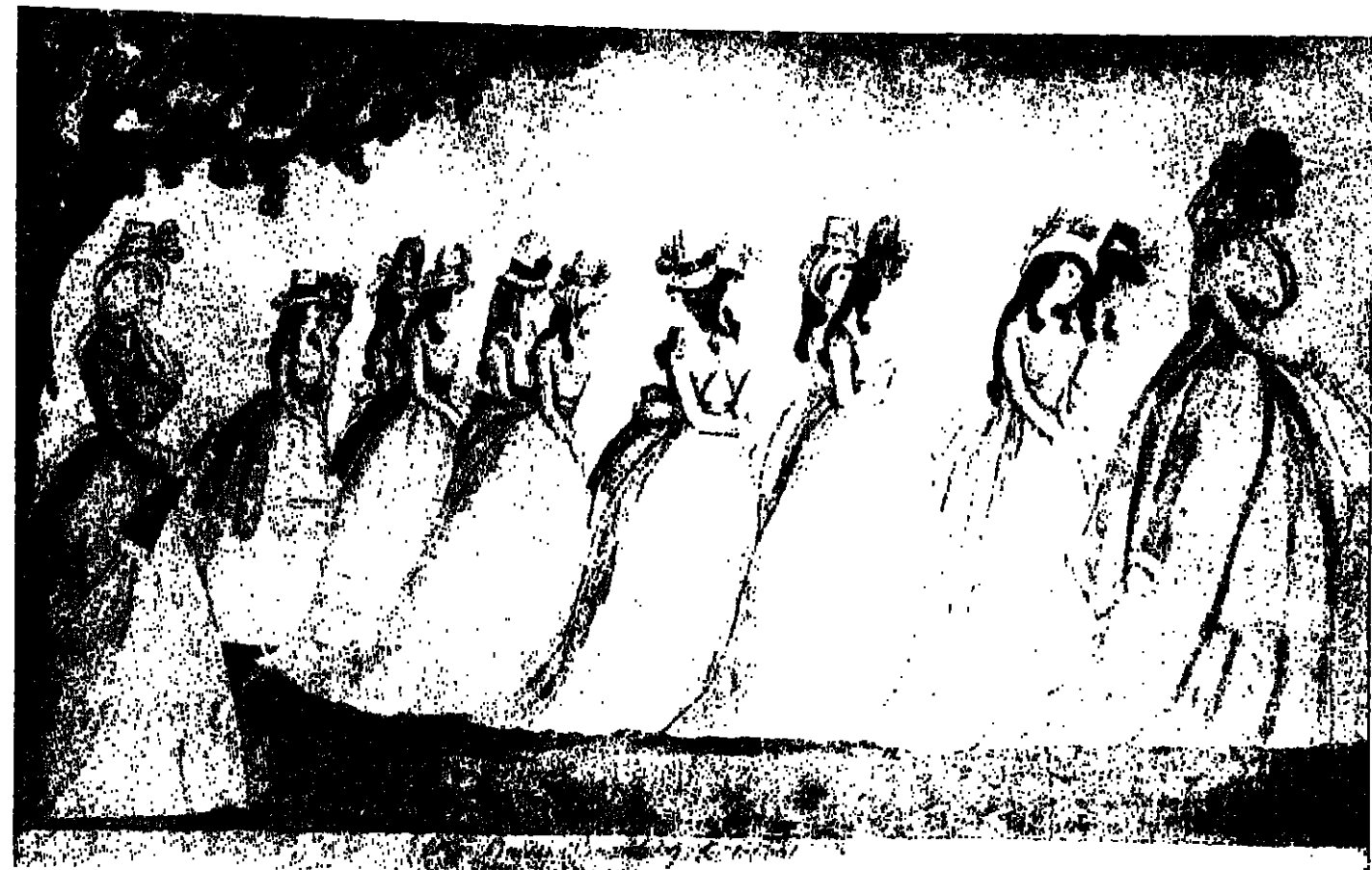
Expecting the worst

R. J. Overy

FELIX SOMARY
The Raven of Zürich: The memoirs of Felix Somary
Translated by A. J. Sherman
100pp. Hurst. £17.50.
1800650187

Cassandra's is a thankless role, no more so than when subsequent events prove just how close to the mark the bleak prognosis was. It was the fate of Felix Somary to be born into an age spilling over with Cassandras; and it is a tribute to the reputation of this arrogant and opinionated Viennese that he remained convinced all his life that he alone had seen the danger coming. His predictions were, if nothing else, consistently gloomy, so much so that he earned the nickname the "Raven of Zürich".

Zürich was only his adopted home, chosen, not surprisingly, because Switzerland was relatively safe from impending calamity, in a world in the grip of what Somary called "the new barbarism". He was born in Vienna in 1881, the son of a wealthy and successful court attorney, and grew up in an intensely bourgeois family clinging on to traditional virtues in a collapsing *fin-de-siècle* world. His childhood was spent among the timeless monuments of the inner city, where Habsburgs had



"The Ladies' Boarding School" (ink and watercolour on paper), by an unknown artist and dating from the end of the eighteenth century, is one of 151 illustrations in English Naïve Painting 1750-1900 by James Ayres (1989p. Thames and Hudson. £6.95. 0 500 27459 2), which has recently been reissued.

rich wife who could secure him in his sovereign territory in Upper Lusatia, bale him out of his crippling debts and ultimately reunite him with Lucie von Pappenheim, the consort to whom these letters were addressed. Various referred to as Schnucke or Lou, she seems to have taken her husband's infidelities for granted, united as they both were in a sentimental bond thoroughly typical of the age of Kleist and Kotzebue.

His English public, knowing nothing of this, could still, as Sarah Austin warned him, feel "rage, scorn and disgust" at the general tone of Pückler's observations. A modern reaction is more likely to be one of astonishment at his coolness and self-assurance, or at his mercurial gift for assuming whatever role the hour demanded of him. At one moment, drinking Schnucke's health from a cow-horn on the top of Snowdon ("the champagne cork flew almost 4,000 feet above sea level") he is not unlike Ferdinand dashing off the poisoned lemonade in Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*, at another, energetically wife-hunting among the gem-bedecked heiresses at Brighton, he has strolled into the silver-fork world of Praed and Mrs Gore.

was. If Somary has a weakness it lies in his conviction that Austria was a good thing for Europe: that the Habsburg state was the source of moral order and security, transcending mere nationalist and social conflict, the scourge of the modern world. For Somary the long age of European peace ushered in by Metternich was only shattered by the Russo-Japanese war in 1904. He forgets - was he ever told? - that it was the same Habsburgs who fought France and Piedmont in 1859, forced war on Prussia in 1866, and would have fought Serbia, too, sooner than they did if the opportunity had come. In 1914 it did; and it is difficult from this account not to see the war as a final throw of the die to reverse the inexorable decline of Habsburg power. Somary hoped the Allies would rebuild the empire in 1919, but he, of all people, must have seen the writing on the wall.

For Somary the war was a great watershed. Thereafter came an age of high government spending, inflation, deficit budgets, and militant labour. The national and international crises of the next thirty years he attributed to the lack of financial discrimination and the rise of vulgar Keynesianism. He predicted the Great Crash well before it came, as he did the Second World War. But he was now out of the mainstream of European life, running a small Zürich bank and occasional errands for the Swiss government, but all too aware that his values of sound finance and social conservatism were out of step with his age. He spent much of the end of his life in the United States, which he found "morbid and irrational", its notions of democracy "childish", and its intellectual life almost non-existent. He lived expecting the worst, and was seldom disappointed. For much of his life he was an outsider, alone, self-contained, shunning company, polite to his wife and family, a man of great integrity and scrupulousness. Few people found him easy to get on with; his abrasive smugness permeates the book. The irony is that had he lived longer he would now be hailed as a guru of the New Right. His emphasis on monetarist economics, his banker's view of the world, his yearning for conservative order and social peace, his firm attachment to traditional family values and individual responsibility, would not have been out of place today. But this is one prediction he failed to make. He was a man both after and before his time.

Lesley Blanch's memoirs of a lifetime's experience of Russia, *Journey into the Mind's Eye: Fragments of an autobiography* (384pp. Century. £5.95. 0 7126 1571 7), was first published in 1968 and is now reissued as a paperback. The style is romantic and the story personal ("I must have been about four years old when Russia took hold of me with giant hands") and culminates in the author's trip to Siberia and the frontiers of Outer Siberia.

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who was the composer, or Reznicek. The letters to Lilli Lehmann (edited by Zoltan Roman) show him trying to persuade the singer to participate in his legendary Mozart cycle at Vienna during the 1905-06 season, in which "every single opera is a new production and needs to be rehearsed afresh".

The difficulty is that the first 2 operas will be sung in a new translation (*Figaro*, especially in the *secco* recitatives, has been substantially revised - in important respects we are going back to the original Beaumarchais), and you would have the task of learning at least the *secco* recitatives anew. . . . We'll discuss everything thoroughly. I shall send you those passages of new text with piano accompaniment, as soon as they are ready.

Mahler was not in fact to secure Lehmann's collaboration in *Figaro*. Moreover, it was not only the translation that Mahler concerned himself with. He also added (ie, composed) a scene of his own to clarify the dramatic action. It was precisely this same last point that he made to Reznicek, whose opera *Donna Diana* was in rehearsal at the Vienna Opera: "A suggestion: the final scene is unsatisfactory, for there is no reply from *Don Cesar*, without which the audience remains dissatisfied. . . . Mahler, who had meanwhile consulted the original text on which the libretto was based, sent the four lines to the composer that he had omitted, with the injunction: "I beg you, dear friend, set these words to effective music and send me them as quickly as possible. *There is no other way!* It would be a great mistake not to do this." What had started as a suggestion ended as a command and the composer dutifully - perhaps gratefully - complied.

Casual but original remarks on music and musicians abound in this volume. He upbraids William Ritter for misquoting him on Beethoven and in doing so clarifies his own perception of his great predecessor: "my pride will be completely satisfied if I am ever looked upon as a legitimate settler in the new territory that B. discovered for us". And time and time again he comes up with observations on one of his own works which may not tell us something we had not guessed for ourselves but expresses a truth with unbeatable brevity and succinctness. He wrote to the conductor Franz Schalk in 1898 about the First Symphony: "The introduction to the first movement is not music but the sound of nature!" - so confirming what he wrote in the score: "Wie ein Naturlaut".

On the vexing question of Mahler's cuts in Wagner, where he has often been accused of inconsistency and failure of nerve (not to speak of dented ideals), in a letter to the singer Leo Slezak, rightly singled out for attention by the editor of this section, Stephen E. Hefling, Mahler comes up with the best and for me a convincing defence of his methods at the Metropolitan in New York. He wrote in 1908:

I cannot possibly try within these few weeks to reform personnel, audience etc., and must therefore in the first instance comply with their customary practice of cuts - especially as my chief task is to attract once again an audience, that has stayed away in disgust because of neglected performances, by providing them with convincing productions and persuading them to wait till the end of each performance.

That is how I proceeded when I arrived in Vienna; above all, I raised the general level of performances and only gradually got rid of cuts, without much discussion. . . . If I were to stay for a prolonged period in New York, I have no doubt that as artistic conditions continued to improve, I would be able to prevent the wholly unjustified, and in a German theatre utterly unforgivable mutilation of Wagner's works.

(Mahler's indignation was prompted by news from Vienna of Weingartner, his successor, reimposing the cuts that he had got rid of.)

Another signally important section (again edited by Hefling) comprises Mahler's letters to Schoenberg. These are mostly slight in content or are postcards. But there is hardly an item which is not eloquent of the friendship that eventually developed between the two men and the closeness of the circle around Mahler. Schoenberg was the fortunate recipient of a postcard from Prague, posted on September 20, 1908, which was signed by Mahler and Alma, Karl Horwitz (a Schoenberg pupil), Alban Berg, Otto Klemperer and the conductor Arthur Bodanzky; and for good measure, there was a salute to Schoenberg on the front of the picture postcard from Klaus Pringsheim, Thomas Mann's brother-in-law, and a coach at the Vienna Opera. All were in

Prague for the première of Mahler's Seventh. The one letter to Schoenberg of any length (from New York, in January 1909) is also of great musical interest. In it Mahler remarks:

Life here is a frantic rush. . . . That's why I like reading letters all the more, thinking of my friends and conversing with them quietly. I have your quartet with me and study it from time to time. But it is difficult for me. I'm so terribly sorry that I cannot follow you better; I look forward to the day when I shall find myself again (and so find you).

In this one letter is revealed Mahler's esteem for his younger colleague, his sense of isolation - "My First Symphony was poorly received here. So you can appreciate that I walk around here fairly incognito" - and his efforts to come to terms with Schoenberg's music.

Hefling identifies the quartet as Schoenberg's Second, and he may well be right. It continues to surprise that Mahler found his younger colleague's music "difficult", and perhaps especially the Second Quartet (if indeed it was the Second to which Mahler refers, and not the First, a dedication copy of which we know Mahler possessed). After all, Mahler himself was no stranger to the sensation of feeling "air blowing from another planet" and in the particular case of the Second Quartet he must surely have realized that he had been an influential model (the idea of incorporating two vocal movements into a string quartet, for instance, was a novel development of Mahler's incorporation of solo song into the symphony). Odder still, one might argue that it was the First Quartet rather than the Second that pre-

Refusing to be great

John Deathridge

FERRUCCIO BUSONI
Selected Letters
Translated and edited by Antony Beaumont
446pp. Faber. £25.
0571 145116

Pfitzner once called Busoni "a cool, elusive spirit" who sits at the piano dreaming about electronically produced micro-tones, proudly mocking the keys for not yielding a "gentle transition from b to c". He is interested only in the negative formula of the decalogue. In music's promised land thou shalt not write in traditional forms, use instruments or just after major and minor. Nor shalt thou accept music as anything but universal without culturally determined rules. "Busoni is extremely musical, but *il n'aime pas la musique* . . . he wants our music to commit suicide."

Contemplating Pfitzner's venom after reading this scrupulously edited selection of Busoni letters I wondered if anyone would still dare to agree with it. In a lively introduction Antony Beaumont writes that Busoni was "as much a virtuoso of the pen as of the pianoforte", commanding a literary style "capable of the same dazzling variety of attack and nuance . . . for which he is remembered as pianist and composer". Beaumont supposes that Busoni never greatly diverged from a quota of two or three letters a day in fifty years of letter writing. On the last point he is probably right: the 352 letters presented here are selected from about 8,000 still extant and there is plenty of evidence that this is only a fraction of those actually written. But "virtuoso of the pen"? "Dazzling variety of attack and nuance"?

This is a delicate moment to "accuse" Beaumont of overselling Busoni. The success of English National Opera's *Doktor Faustus* (in no small measure due to Beaumont's advocacy of it) showed that Stravinsky wasn't exaggerating when he once described a performance of the opera as "one of the major theatrical experiences of my life". Beaumont's informative study *Busoni the Composer* (re-viewed in the TLS of December 6, 1985) has put Busoni on the map again and offers an enticing parallel with Forkel's pioneering work on Bach at the beginning of the nineteenth century. (For years Bach was the preserve only of a relatively small circle - including Mozart - before Forkel helped him into the limelight.) Yet after finishing the correspondence I began to think chastely that Beaumont may be overdoing things. Certainly, I disagree with him

sented much tougher problems of comprehensibility, even for the sophisticated musician. This in some sense puzzling matter is nicely - and ironically - rounded off when we recall that in earlier years Schoenberg had had difficulties of his own in understanding Mahler's music.

Mahler was committed to the support of new ideas and initiatives in many fields. It was entirely typical of him, as Hefling reminds us, that in 1910 - a year later than the letter from which I have quoted - he "attended rehearsals of the Second Quartet, which was to be performed at an exhibition of Schoenberg's paintings in Vienna that October. And, anonymously . . . purchased three of the canvases." It was no less typical, in an altogether different field, that he was an early and stalwart supporter of the German Composers' "Co-operative", a forerunner of today's authors' and composers' copyright protection and performing right organizations.

There is one quality of Mahler's I have not yet mentioned. He was noted for his impatience, but he could also be phlegmatic. As he wrote to Annie Mincioux in 1896: "I am 35 years old (single, in case that interests you), scarcely known and scarcely performed! But I shall not let that get me down! I have patience and shall wait!" Perhaps we have been too patient ourselves in regard to the methodical collection and publication of Mahler's letters. This admirable volume - serviceably translated by Richard Stokes (though it's useful to have the original German edition [Zsolnay, 1983] to

about the letters (and also with Dent, incidentally, who liked to compare them with Mozart's). Many of them, including the youthful ones, have an airless solemnity; Busoni's literary style is less virtuosic than infuriatingly virtuosic - like a child trying to impress ambitious parents with a good imitation of adult wisdom. And the later letters, though a bit livelier, are never quite without the uncanny, self-consciously moralistic persona that prompted Pfitzner's attack.

Not that Busoni is averse to some occasional venom of his own. Pfitzner's music is like "rain mixed with ammonia". Wagner is "a little, contemptible Saxon, with boring music and some strokes of genius". There is a refreshing swipe at Elgar. And there are some nasty remarks about Schumann, who "shakes his head" at Busoni's idol Liszt "until you can hear the grey matter slopping about". Busoni's attitude to Schumann is puzzling, as Pfitzner pointed out, since both were pianist composers who wanted to create entirely original music free of traditional models and the sound of familiar instruments, yet at the same time without losing sight of the classical spirit. Even now the paradox leads to serious misunderstandings of both men's music. But if it makes them seem close, Busoni insists time and again that they are nothing of the kind. Elaborating an imaginary scenario, he writes: "Schumann sinks into the depths of insanity, composes Clara Wieck who rises out of a trap as the 'Träumerei'; curtain. In Act Two they play piano duets (because neither of them can play a piece on their own), and from the nostalgia of this four-handed Romanticism arises the first glee-club chorus of Goethe's Faust." Schumann is "that Protestant parson, that Saturday-evening stay-at-home, Sunday-afternoon sonata-player, stubbornly tedious sequence-repeater!"

The galumphing philistinism shows perhaps that Busoni was not so cool and elusive as Pfitzner thought he was. Still, the question raised by these letters is not whether we catch glimpses of the "real" Busoni behind the public mask of the "lovable dreamer" (as the German critic Paul Bekker called him), but whether they offer any insight into his controversial stature as a composer. In a letter to Henri Poul, Busoni writes:

What I can say from my own memories of being an infant prodigy is that it was very useful to me to have been impressed from the outset by the possibility and necessity of becoming a great man; whereby dissatisfaction was always expressed at my achievements so far. . . . But apparent dissatisfaction, head-shaking and lecturing should not be exaggerated; for it can easily lead to discouragement or defiance. . . . True seriousness did not appear until the onset of adult

hood and independent character. Until a few years ago I hated and neglected my piano playing. I used to prefer reading to making music.

It is tempting to read volumes into this, not least the idea that Busoni had to turn the very notion of greatness on its head in order to survive the terrors of being a *Wunderkind*. The letter is not exactly the ultimate key to the bloodlessness of the *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* or the inscrutable symbolism at the end of *Doktor Faustus*; but it may help to explain why, in an almost disembodied search for perfection in art, Busoni simply refuses to be great.

The aesthetic consequences of Busoni's self-appointed role as a kind of heroic anti-hero in music are admittedly difficult to fathom. There are signs in the letters, however, that in terms of emotional strain and lack of sympathetic response the price he paid for being a "lovable dreamer" instead of an unlovable aggressor was probably too high. His open reply to Pfitzner (excluded from this selection) is conciliatory and disappointing. Yet to a friend he writes: "I had to restrain my bitterness . . . [Pfitzner] has slandered me and my Aesthetic with a stab in the back. . . . Germany is always turning out lesser Martin Luthers, men who seem, in the people's eye, bold reformers but who are basically quarrelsome, rigid sectarians." If only Busoni had had the courage to say some of that in public.

Busoni is none the less a far from simple target for the critic. Pfitzner would have been surprised to learn in these days of IRCAM and burgeoning linguistic studies of so-called musical "grammar" that some of the questions Busoni raises about electronically produced sound and allegedly culturally determined "rules" look uncannily prescient. Busoni is open-minded about most things from new music to automobiles (though not about American capitalism) and he has the happy knack of provoking responses in others that are more illuminating about the responders than about himself. Thomas Mann noticed once that Pfitzner's philippic against Busoni is less a diatribe about a futuristic Moses than a manifesto on behalf of his own masterpiece *Palesstrina*. Schoenberg in his letters to Busoni, too, becomes quickly embroiled in major statements about himself even though he is ostensibly trying to persuade Busoni to resist (among other things) the evils of "perfection". Beaumont has translated the complete Busoni-Schoenberg correspondence for the first time and added it as an appendix. Like the rest of the book, it is going to be difficult to do without.

John Deathridge

Eric Korn

If you go down to the woods today it will be no surprise to you to find antiquarian booksellers popping out of every dry tree and damp bit of woodwork: for every dealer that ever there was in Bloomsbury or Mayfair for certain BECOZ this week's the week the ABA the ILAB the PBFA and the BBFA and other marauding gangs with no acronyms have their No-picnic-I-can-tell-you (see ads for details).

In case you are a novice at the book-fair caper, here are a few tips to help make your visit more enjoyable and to assure you of the attention of the stall-holders.

There is no real guide to the value of a rarity but the bookseller's instinct of how scarce and how desirable it is. He is thus eager to get feedback from you the public, "the most important person in his business" as he will smilingly hasten to assure you. So feedback - along the lines of "We've got shelves and shelves just like that at home" or "You wouldn't catch me laying out good money for a groovy old thing/brand-new book" is invaluable. It is a courtesy to introduce remarks with some modest phrase like "Of course I'm not a collector" or "I'm one of those peculiar people who buy books to read them".

Similarly, the original published price of a book is often a useful hint to its second-hand value: many booksellers, especially modern literature dealers, are busy people who don't have time for all the research they would like to undertake, so they will be particularly glad if you point out the discrepancy between the published price (say three shillings and sixpence) printed on the dust-wrapper and the often considerably greater price (say £350) pencilled on the fly. (The third volume of my autobiography, *Pencilings on the Fly*, will be available shortly from all good remainder shops.)

Naturally, most people visiting bookshops or book-fairs are not interested in adding to their collections ("it's not the money, it's the space"), but are often eager to find out more about the books they already own. The sort of information they are looking for is something along the lines of "What's it worth?" or "What's it worth to you?" or "Can you direct me to a bookshop that will give me more?" So here are:

TEN STEPS TO MORE PROFICIENT BOOKSELLING FOR THE NONPROFESSIONAL OF TURN OLD PAPER INTO NEW IDEAS

1) *Reconnaissance*. Wander about the stand, refusing all offers of assistance. This will also serve to unsettle the dealer. Murmur "Just browsing" in a firm but assertive manner. Alternatively, either approach ceremoniously and ask if you are permitted to look at the stock, specifying that they are not your class of book, that you are afraid of being tempted, that you are just a simple academic, humble

collector, parsimonious millionaire, unsparing perfectionist (whichever role appeals).

2) *Foreplay*. Establish your own standing as nongreenhorn and unwillingness to be fooled. Make it clear that you are an insider. This is best done by examining a few books at random, looking at the prices and returning the volumes hastily to the shelves, while fixing the dealer with a conspiratorial nod. A whistle of astonishment would be merely vulgar, but a low appreciative chuckle of complicity will not be out of place.

3) *The Feint*. Approach the subject by indirection. If you are hoping to place a copy of the *Illustrated London News* Souvenir of the Coronation of George VI, express an interest in constitutional law. If you wish to sell Mrs Trimmer's *Prinns illustrative of Sacred History* (Volume I only), ask to see the work of English engravers of the late eighteenth century. The price the bookseller demands for what he shows you (a copy of *Songs of Innocence*, for example, similarly a children's book with amateurish hand colouring) will give you an indication of what to ask for yours.

4) *The Engagement*. Find out if the bookseller buys books, by asking him directly ("Do you buy books as well?") or indirectly ("I suppose things like this are pretty hard to get hold of..."). It is important to do this, since only a minority of booksellers obtain their stock by purchase. Do not be deterred by a waggish answer ("No I printed all these myself, they fell off the back of a lorry, I only buy at jumble sales" etc): many booksellers fancy themselves as drolls.

5) *The Ambuscade*. Get an estimate of the value of your book before you show it to him. This is paramount. As soon as the book is in his hands he will start turning pages, now fast, now slow, now racing through the book as if counting, now stopping to attend to some invisible feature: there will be cluckings and gobbings and clicks as in the language of the Iking and well-simulated cries of surprise and regret. Your expression must make it clear that none of this takes you in for a moment. Your position will be immeasurably strengthened if you have coaxed him into uttering a price - any price - without the distraction of a hostage in his hands. Thus:

Aspirant: What is Shelley worth?
Bookseller: Which Shelley?

Would-be seller: Percival Bysshe Shelley, 1799-1822, is the one I had in mind. He also used several pseudonyms, but they are my little secret. [Caution here: there is no record of the approach I-am-interested-in-the-local-history-of-south-west-Buckinghamshire-have-you anything-by-the-Hermit-of-Marlow? meeting with success.]

Bookperson: I meant what works of Shelley and in particular what editions. Many are in print at popular prices.

Aspirant: (who owns a limp leather *Gems of* with yapp edges and a green bow, circa 1895,

seent of which operated so strongly on her nerves that she awoke.

Competition No 330

Winner: Lindsey Stainton

Answers:

1 My dear Godson Guy,
I learned from your mother, by pressing her hard, some time ago that it would be a convenience to you and a great help in your career to possess an Association football - whereupon, in my desire that you should receive the precious object from no hand but mine, I cast about me for the proper place to procure it. But I am living for the present in a tiny, stunted country town, where luxuries are few and football shops unheard of, so I was a long time getting a clue that would set me on the right road.
Henry James, Letter to Guy Hoyer Millar, Rye.

2 Ay, the ball is flying.
The lads play heart and soul;
The goal stands up, the keeper
Stands up to keep the goal.
A. E. Housman, *A Shipshape Lad*, XXVII.

3 Jones takes her neat red Pale, and now
She trips to milk the Sand-rail Cow,
Where for some sturdy foot-ball Symp, Jones strikes a sibilant or twain.
"Sir Henry Wotton, "On a Bank as I sat in Fishing".

slyly): No, I was more interested in nineteenth-century editions.

Bookfellow (with the patience for which etc: Well of course some of them are extremely rare. The first English *Cenci* is relatively common, but *Queen Mab* might set you back ten grand.

However he may wriggle later, this constitutes an offer.

6) *The Proffer*. Some preparation is required. Do not be too delicate to draw attention to rubrics like "This is a very rare old book" in an antique hand or "My grandfather, who was lord lieutenant of St Vincent, said it was the only copy he had ever seen", or best of all "Keep this carefully my son, as I am sure it will be worth pounds and pounds some day". Unscrupulous book dealers may seek to erase these telltale indications, so it is best to go over them in indelible pencil. Little sums like

1927

1724

203 years old!

add considerably to the charm of a book and you would be doing nothing improper by embellishing the book with a few.

This is probably as much as you can absorb at once. Stages 7-10 - *The Incredible Courtesan*, *The Expositious Direct* (discretionary), *The Discreet Mention of Sotheby's* (essential), *The Unashamed Appeal to Philanthropy*, *The Acceptance Grudging* - will be unveiled in time for the 1988 shindig.

* * *

You can get a hint about scarcity from the number of requests for a book in the columns of those magazines which consist of nothing but columns of requests for books. (These, even their editors would admit, are profitable to read but not truly loveable.) The idea is that hungry seekers after truth or profit drop in on their main man and give him a shopping list, he sends the lists to the magazine, and thousands of book scouts throughout the country write in with competitively priced offers. The dealer then uses his expert knowledge to select some of the offerings and recommend them to his customer. (What happens in my case - the computer hasn't been built that could make my business run more efficiently - is that the scouts write in and I lose the name and address of the customer; so if you are looking for the nineteenth impression of the Penguin *Ulysses*, get in touch: it could be your lucky day.)

Charting this is terribly misleading, of course, for it only tells you about the demand for a book, and nothing about the supply. I

have a theory which flies in the face of all economists, not a bad thing to do to them, but the price of fashionably rare books, unlike the price of rational commodities, depends exclusively on the demand: once everyone decides that their library is a contemptible sham without Kathy Acker's first book (a pseudonymous volume of sermons) and that the price is \$1,750, they will go on paying out their \$1,750 (or \$14.95 without the dustwrapper) long after it should have become apparent that someone in Brooklyn has a truckload.

It is also misleading in that some books are asked for week after week without success because they are of supreme rarity ("works of the Hermit of Marlow avidly sought for keen collector of S. W. Buckinghamshire local material. Several copies needed. Best prices paid. Without dustwrapper may do"); others because no one will risk the price of a stamp quoting them, and yet others because the advertiser has got fourteen copies and is trying to create a demand, still others because the advertiser has got the name wrong and is trying to summon up a ghost.

* * *

I had a classics teacher who went to some lengths, mainly alcoholic, to be unable to recall the moniker of Hierostatus, the man who burned down the Temple of Diana in order that his name should be remembered. It was a small revenge but I see what he meant, and in the same spirit I hope no one will tell me who wrote *Things I shouldn't tell* (Nash and Grayson, 1924). In a tone of unsurmountably lofty blow-you-jacquerie, he vouchsafes:

Regarding my anonymity, that, of course, is a *zeen de Polchinnelle* to men and women really conversant with English and Foreign Society during the sky odd years preceding the Great War; for I give myself away almost in every chapter. To those who have begun to live only just before the war, my identity cannot be of much interest, inasmuch as what I write is not concerned with persons and things within the range of their personal knowledge.

I can forgive a lot to the man who starts in index thus:

Abdul Aziz (the sultan)
Admiral Lord (now Dunraven)
Aida (the opera)

but can forgiveness extend to this?

In treating of the most trivial matters I have been careful to be accurate; and to avoid, even in my gossip, anything resembling the *blague de la boulevardier*, concerning which, by the way, Reman once asked me, with a quizzical smile, whether perhaps it might not be the debilitated offspring of Cartesian scepticism!

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Mark Abley is the author of *Beyond Forget: Rediscovering the prairies*, published in 1986.
Antony Beevor is the author of *The Spanish Civil War*, 1982.
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Richard Clogg's *Politics and the Academy: Arnold Toynbee and the Komor Chuir* was published in May. A second edition of his *A Short History of Modern Greece* appeared last year.
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Peter Murray's books include *Pinnets and the Grandeur of Ancient Rome*, 1971.
Bernard O'Donoghue's new collection of poems, *Poaching Rights*, will be published shortly.
R. J. Overy's most recent book, *The Origins of the Second World War*, was published in February.
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Frances Spalding's books include *British Art Since 1900*, 1986.
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Randall Stevenson is a lecturer in English Literature at the University of Edinburgh, and author of *The British Novel Since the Thirties*, 1986.
John Sutherland's books include *Fiction and the Fiction Industry*, 1978. He is a Professor in the Division of Humanities at the California Institute of Technology.
Hugh Williams's most recent collection of poems, *Writing Home*, was published in 1985.

Letters

Change in the Soviet Union

Sir, - At a time when most professional students of the Soviet Union on both sides of the Atlantic have noted significant and moderately encouraging policy innovation within what is still, of course, an authoritarian political system, it was to be expected that there would be a minor backlash from people with incorrigibly closed minds and from nature's McCarthyites. The distortion and innuendo to which several of your correspondents have resorted are, however, something I have not previously encountered during a quarter of a century of study of the Soviet Union.

I need no lessons from Helen Szamuely (Letters, June 12) on how to distinguish Soviet propaganda and disinformation from information. Students of any political system have to weigh carefully evidence from different sources and be conscious of the extent to which, for example, the statements or memoirs of politicians are likely to be self-serving and - in both senses of the term - partial. In many ways it is harder to study the Soviet system than (to take the case cited) the French one, but to see Soviet sources as dividing simply into "official or unofficial accounts" suggests that Helen Szamuely does not have the first idea of how to go about it.

There are rules of the game which govern Soviet writing - taboo subjects certainly, but also ways of expressing a variety of conflicting views on matters of considerable importance. Soviet intellectuals know how to discard the chaff and find the kernels of information or distinctive ideas, and Western students of the Soviet system have had to do likewise. Thus, for instance, Jerry Hough, in his *The Struggle for the Third World: Soviet debates and American options* (one of the books considered in my review of March 27) and in numerous articles, has supplied ample evidence of the wide range of Soviet views on relations with the Third World which lie behind a surface unity of outlook, and Gilbert Rozman, in *A Mirror for Socialism: Soviet criticisms of China* (1985), has shown in some detail how Soviet writing about China has often become a way of making points of great significance about the Soviet Union.

Helen Szamuely repeats Roger Scruton's offensive innuendo that scholars who actually go to the Soviet Union are being rewarded or encouraged by the Soviet authorities because they are "well disposed" to the "Soviet Government". The fact is that the overwhelming majority of British and American specialists on the Soviet Union do visit that country and get views without for a moment pretending to be admirers of the system they study. They do, however, try to be objective and to distinguish between propaganda and reality. They are, I would suggest, much better able to tell the difference between disinformation and information than those who deliberately stay at home and, in a paranoid manner, see Soviet-inspired disinformation coming at them from all directions.

The decision not to go to the country on which they write is for some specialists a deliberate one. They would rather nurse their stereotypes to keep them warm than expose them to any dangerously fresh breezes which might be blowing from Siberia to Moscow. I recall one such specialist telling me that he had no need or desire ever to go to the Soviet Union again. He had been there once twenty-five years ago and so now he knew what the USSR was like.

Within the small minority of British specialists who cannot get a Soviet visa, scholars of Russian or East European family origin seem to figure disproportionately. The whole question of issues of visas is not as clear to me as it is to those with a taste for slander and witch-hunting. Among people who have been refused, I can think of several who are less critical in their general attitude to the Soviet Union than many of those who go there.

I would not wish to suggest that Helen Szamuely is engaging in disinformation of her own and so I must conclude that her distortion of my views is due to an inability to understand that there is a large intermediate area of change between the purely cosmetic, on the one hand, and the "profound" and systemic,

on the other. I did not in my review even imply that the Soviet system is now a reformed one, but wrote that "the 'moderate reform' envisaged by Colton . . . is already under way" and that "a point will come at which . . . the . . . Soviet leadership will have to decide between going beyond this to the implementation of more radical reform, and drawing back". Far from assuming that the welcome extension of the range of debate and of critical analysis now to be found in Soviet publications will be institutionalized, that the "moderate reform" enunciated thus far will be fully implemented or that, in due course, "more radical reform" will take place, I wrote that "the outcome is uncertain, for . . . a political struggle is going on in the Soviet Union - and not only on the fringes of society but within every major institution".

Finally, let me question Helen Szamuely's assertion that "Russians inside and outside the Soviet Union have been writing and saying the same thing: nothing very much has changed". If there is one thing I have learned from going to the Soviet Union over the years, it is the absurdity of making that kind of generalization about what Russians think and say. On this particular topic, the more sophisticated distinction between the numerous things which have changed and the many which have not changed, but there is a whole range of attitudes which can increasingly be found even in the pages of Soviet publications. Since, however, Helen Szamuely might regard these as "official accounts" and since she thinks I have been quoting Andrei Sakharov too much, let me assure her that not all talented Russians in exile share her views.

In a recent interview (published in the *International Herald Tribune* on June 9), Vladimir Voinovich said "we are in a moment of hope" and went on: "I'm known as a very tough critic, but I am definitely for this process of reform . . .". When Khrushchev fell, it was said that he had tried to leap across the abyss in two jumps. Gorbachev is more of a tightrope walker . . . Gorbachev's intentions are serious but the system resists and will resist. It may be an impossible mission."

So it may. But thank goodness there are Russians abroad as well as in the Soviet Union whose perspectives are not so narrow or minds so closed as those of some of your correspondents.

ARCHIE BROWN.
St Antony's College, Oxford.

Kant and Aesthetics

Sir, - Roger Scruton tells us ("Modern philosophy and the neglect of aesthetics", June 5) that F. R. Leavis "made mincemeat" of Lord Snow's idea that there is a culture of science, that we must "strike down" the pretensions of science, and much more in the same vein. It seems to me that Professor Scruton - like Leavis - mistakes aggressiveness of assertion for force of argument. He should ask himself whether he has given a single good reason why a philosopher who holds that logic, semantics and philosophy of science are more central to the discipline than aesthetics or literary criticism ought (ie, ought rationally) to change his mind. If he hasn't, then all his rhetoric is mere hot air - even if one happens to agree with it.

JAMES WATSON.
St. John's College, Cambridge.

Sir, - Roger Scruton's effort to make the Kant of *Critique of Judgment* into a proto-Nietzschean aesthete ("In Kant's third Critique . . . it is aesthetic experience which reveals the sense of the world . . .") Kant was in a way right to single out the aesthetic as, so to speak, next in line to the Eucharist, as the source of meaning" forgets the absolute primacy that Kant always gives to "practical" (moral) reasoning, to respect (out of "good will") for persons as objective "ends" - as members of a Kingdom of Ends who ought never to be used merely as means. After all, even *Judgment* says that beauty is no more than the "symbol" of the "morally good"; but a symbol only stands for something which retains its primacy. And even *Judgment* ends, not with "aesthetic" but with "teleological" judgment: with the notion that "it is not open to us in the case of man . . . to

ask the further question: for what end (*quem in finem*) does he exist? His existence inherently involves the highest end . . . It is only as a moral being that man can be the final end of creation".

As for the "Eucharist": on Scruton's own showing, no Kantian can "grasp the idea of God". Why, then, place the aesthetic "next in line to the Eucharist" when, for Kant, aesthetics is subordinate to ethics and ethics has a certainty that theology can never attain? To view Kant as a quasi-religious demi-aesthete treats him as a mere means to the implausible end of tracing the operations of Schiller, Hegel and Nietzsche straight back to Königsberg.

PATRICK RILEY.
Jesus College, Oxford.

A Science of Feeling

Sir, - I did not deny, as Saul Rosenzweig (Letters, May 29) suggests, the "immense variety of feelings . . . that poets and patients appear readily to experience". I was simply saying that no one has ever consistently described them introspectively, certainly not poets or patients, or, at least so far, phenomenologists. My point was that by looking at the contingencies of reinforcement under which what is felt occurs a much better account may be reached.

B. F. SKINNER.
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Lost Books

Sir, - The discovery of a copy of Volume Three of David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* containing holograph corrections in the author's hand (Letters, April 4, 1975), raised the possibility that significant authorial amendments were made in copies of Volumes One and Two of this work, although it can be shown that those copies associated with Kames and Pope merely incorporate minor corrections.

I have recently found, however, that much of David Hume's library became the property of his nephew, Baron David Hume, and that, following the Baron's death, this library was catalogued by an Edinburgh bookseller, Thomas G. Stevenson. Among the titles entered in Stevenson's manuscript catalogue there are several by Hume himself, including the following:

Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. 2 vols. 8" Half-bound uncut. Lond. 1739. . . . This copy has got a Vast of Corrections and Additions in the handwriting of the Author.

An extensive search for these two volumes and their potentially significant corrections and additions has so far been in vain. Baron Hume's direct heir has been traced, but reports that he has nothing from the Hume library. Indeed, there is incontrovertible evidence that, c 1850, Stevenson began selling books from this library, including the Baron's amended copies of his works. Stevenson's printed sale catalogues include no entry for the authorially amended volumes of Hume's *Treatise*, but Stevenson may well have sold these to one of the collectors who frequented his large bookshop.

I have no additional evidence to support this conjecture, but as a critical edition of Hume's philosophical, political, and literary works is now being prepared, I hope some reader of the TLS can inform me of the present location of these two volumes, in the expectation that Hume's "Vast of Corrections and Additions" can be included in the new edition of the *Treatise*.

DAVID FATE NORTON.
National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Disinformation

Sir, - I see that I have been credited a history of the Mohawks (Among this week's contributors, May 22). Though I have published a history of the Mamluk Sultanate, I have scarcely begun to collect my thoughts on the subject of Hiawatha and the Five Nations. For the time being at least, the Mohawk history must be reckoned as part of the small but growing body of pseudopigraphy bearing my name.

ROBERT IRWIN.
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Minority Poets

Sir, - Irony-detection is perhaps at a low ebb these days, so I cannot blame Sylvia Kantaris (Letters, May 22) for misreading my "point" on the evidence of Lorna Sage's extracts (May 15) from my "open letter to Michael Schmidt". She threw the irony out with the ellipses. "Too kind"? Your readers will be able to judge for themselves from the next issue of *PN Review*.

I do not believe that "you have to be black, female, working-class and/or artless to achieve commercial credibility"! It is a simple fact, though, that we find it harder to generate interest in books by those poets who have no talent for even the most inoffensive self-promotion nor desire to be media-packaged by our ever-keen-to-exploit publicity machine, than to sell books by poets for whom there are marketing "angles" even as tenuous, alas, as the colour of their skin or their sex. For heaven's sake! The consumerist systems of our age love labels: poets ought to hate them.

That is why the race-sex-class "issue" worries me less than does how to sell more books without tailoring editorial and production standards to the market place, and on a promotion budget which doesn't run to the threat of helicopters. I don't like slick packaging and gimmicks; one cannot market a renaissance of interest in poetry into being.

Aside from its topical gripes, my "open letter" made a number of subsidiary points, which Lorna Sage was unable to distinguish from the main one. Which is that the spirit of "commercialism" - as distinct from reasonable, necessary and imaginative sales-promotion - embodies attitudes both repugnant and antithetical to the creative spirit of poetry, which it seeks to reduce and package as yet another consumer product. Do we need an Arts Descriptions Act?

Commercialism distorts both public knowledge and appreciation of poetry. My instincts tell me that it may even tend to deprave and corrupt some of the practitioners of the art: I offer that as a wild assertion for others to debate. To my certain knowledge, the present climate exercises some insidious pressures: "why can't we publish another X?" ("For X read any trendy poet) is a question that has been put in all innocence to editors by publicity departments.

Poetry is not "made to sell and sell quickly". What is anti-materialist in spirit requires a particularly responsible and sensitive approach in marketing, which neither helicopters nor misrepresentation (hype of various kinds, economy with the truth in publishers' advertising) can provide. Can poetry in fact be sold effectively for what it is, which is different from everything else that's on offer in our supposed culture?

PETER JAY.
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Hawthorne's Letters

Sir, - I suspect that Harold Beaver and I agree (Letters, June 5). His quotations underline my review's assertion that Melville felt a deep affection for Hawthorne. However, as the *Letters* indicate, Hawthorne did not return these feelings with comparable intensity.

The misprinted date (1850 for 1851) appeared because the review was published before I had an opportunity to read the proof.

HELEN MCNEIL.
Department of American Studies, University of East Anglia, Norwich.

'Picture Palace'

Sir, - I am sorry to have given a misleading account of Rupert Hart-Davis's part in the early history of Malcolm Muggeridge's novel *Picture Palace* (Letters, June 5), which I had inferred from a contemporary diary entry (*Like It Was*). I should, perhaps, have recalled a remark of Graham Greene's when asked what Muggeridge could have meant when he said that "Where Graham is, sin stops". "What was that again? Where Graham is . . . I haven't the faintest idea what he meant by that. Malcolm is, er . . . I wouldn't trust Malcolm very far."

CHRISTOPHER HAWTREE.
53 Westbourne Street, Hove, Sussex.

John Cornhill

COMMENTARY

Ideas in things

Malcolm Bowie

JULES MASSENET
Manon
Covent Garden

For Michel Leiris, in the first volume of his autobiographical *La Règle du jeu*, childhood was a series of uncanny linguistic effects. The child's world was peopled with phantoms and it was language that put them there. Massenet's *Manon* supplied Leiris with a perfect example of the enchantment that words could exercise upon ordinary household things. "Adieu, notre petite table!", Manon sings in Act II of the opera as she prepares to abandon Des Grieux for a life of easeful kept-womanhood. The table she addresses is a metonym, as the new rhetoricians would say, for Des Grieux himself, and it is fitting that Manon should entangle him at this point in the action: how solid and wooden a commodity he seems now that frills and flounces are in sight and the aroma of money in the air. But for the young Leiris, listening to the singer's required sound-

ing of the otherwise mute "e" that ends "petite", operatic diction had brought a far from solid piece of furniture into existence. "Notre petite table" is a fluid portmanteau of possible artefacts - a cowshed, a redrears, a totem, a newfangled washbasin. And the magical properties of the single displaced syllable "te" are still at work in Act III, as Des Grieux prepares to take holy orders in the seminary of Saint-Sulpice. Could it be, Leiris wonders, that the migratory "table" has come to rest in Des Grieux's prayer-stool or his pedestal table and that his monkish observances will be watched over by a material world perpetually on the brink of dissolution?

Young Leiris had found a snag, a semantic abyss, in an opera that in the twenty-five years or so since its first performance in 1884 had become the very model of mellifluous charm. *Manon* was being performed on average twenty-seven times a year at the Opéra-Comique alone, had already reached far-flung theatres around the world, and seemed everywhere it went to have a simple message for the bourgeoisie: that if you treat your artist well he will apply a tuneful glaze to his picture of socie-

ty and turn prostitution, gambling, chicanery, female servitude, class *ressentiment*, penal transportation and premature death into an agreeable evening out, merry and affecting by turns.

One doesn't want to be too much of an abyss-hunting killjoy about *Manon*, of course, and a musical work in which the shortest route from one tune to the next lies by way of a third tune has its own kind of idyllic appeal. But Meilhac and Gille in the libretto that they extracted from Prévost's novel, and Massenet in the music that he wrote for it, went to work as zealous expurgators. The problem is not just that sexual passion is presented apologetically in the opera - aroused in the first of the five acts, consummated in the first interval and already the subject of tearful nostalgia by the start of Act II - but that Prévost's ironic fabric of other-than-sexual motives has been stripped away. Prévost's Des Grieux is a snob; he disdains the labouring multitude and is prepared to resort to card-sharpping and a refined version of pimping rather than join them, even on a temporary or part-time basis. Where his desire for Manon is shot through with self-protective mercantile calculation, Manon's desire for him is offset by money motives of a much plainer sort: she is one of the hungry poor and, in the first place, looks to her admirers for food rather than frills. Not blessed with any kind of radicalism or proto-feminism, Prévost nevertheless spelled out these tensions and contradictions with relentless urgency in the short span of his novel. Massenet and his team, when they did not remove them altogether, flattened them out into an endless *arioso*, alternatively grave and gay.

Rudolf Noelte's new Covent Garden production brings together a number of formidable talents, all seemingly intent upon giving depth and angularity to the work. Jeffrey Tate succumb to the temptation of purely cinematic values. The novel's timeless provinciality, with dusty almond trees in the square, rotting wood verandas, and vultures perched along roofs is rejected. Instead he has chosen to film amid the restored colonial beauty of Morpans. And inside his red-tiled, freshly whitewashed houses there are no hammocks or cheap furniture. In fact the interior scenes appear to have been shot mostly in the tourist showpiece of Cartagena, with rooms full of valuable antiques giving on to wonderful courtyards.

There are one or two good roles and a few good moments in the film. Anthony Delon as Santiago Nasar is excellent, especially in the crucial murder scene in the town square. But Rupert Everett, alternating between petulant charm and petulant anger in the role of Bayardo San Román, proves a major liability. The film's most preposterous defect is the way he and his father are the only two members of the cast who speak in English (Rosi claims that Bayardo San Román might perfectly well be an Englishman from the West Indies).

A cavalier attitude to the book is apparent throughout the film. To provide some picturesque wildlife footage, Bayardo is put in a boat alone with his fiancée (Ornella Muti), even though her mother's vigilant chaperoning is the key point of the story. The periods in which the action is set, both contemporary and flashback are changed for no good reason. In the book, General San Román (the other honorary Englishman) defeated García Márquez's ubiquitous hero, Colonel Aureliano Buendía, in what was presumably The War of a Thousand Days (1899-1902). But here we see him as a young sixty-year-old in the late 1950s.

The final insult comes in the last scene. Rosi cannot resist an attempt to improve the story. He has the former bridegroom return and embrace the greying Angela. It is hard to believe that a director of his calibre could be tempted into such a crass mistake. Apart from *Innocent Eréndira*, which had originally been written as a film script, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is the first of García Márquez's novels to be filmed. It is not easy to imagine him welcoming other such versions of his work.

Macho y mama

Robert Snell

Doña Herlinda and Her Son
Various cinemas

The National Film Theatre's publicity for this season of Jaime Humberto Hermosillo's films rightly stresses that, as an openly gay Latin American film-maker, he is a rare phenomenon. It is not wholly inaccurate, either, to describe him as Mexico's Eric Rohmer, although *Doña Herlinda and Her Son*, at least, concerns itself less with personal obsessions than would a Rohmer film, and more with public forms of evasion, disguise and consolation. Neither should comparisons with European film-makers obscure the specifically Mexican dimensions of Hermosillo's film. It is a comedy based on a story by Jorge López Paez, a reworking of the old Hispanic theme of the power of the mother; it is also, on its most significant level, a statement about modern Mexico itself.

The plot concerns a gay couple, Rodolfo and Ramón, and the effort of Rodolfo's mother, Doña Herlinda, to ensure her son's happiness, sexual and social; the affair with the music student Ramón must be allowed to continue, unacknowledged, but Rodolfo must marry. Doña Herlinda - played by the splendid Olga Belong to the *hante bourgeoisie* of the provincial capital Guadalajara. Inhabitants of this world spend their honeymoons in Hawaii and San Francisco; at the same time, they are self-consciously "Mexicanist". On Sundays, mother, son, lover and fiancée drink tequila in a delightful outdoor cafe where they are entertained both by guitar-strumming *machichis* in their folk costumes, and by a post-punk electric dance band. While Rodolfo and Olga are snapping the thighs of Hawaii and San Francisco, Doña Herlinda seeks to lift poor Ramón's spirits by treating him to endless trips to the cinema and visits to traditional craft shops.

Whether or not Rodolfo, Ramón, Olga and the new baby really do live happily ever after in a man's extended household, we shall never know. But the physical fabric of their world

is attentive to the more than occasional acerbity and *pointillisme* of Massenet's orchestration; Julia Migenes brings some of the rage and defiance of her Carmen to the often merely melting role of Manon; and Nell Shicoff swatches Des Grieux in a ripe swooning tone that speaks of impossibility and excess. Most remarkable of all, perhaps, are Peter Rice's designs. These go far beyond the sleek allusions to Fragonard, Chardin and Greuze by which "eighteenth-century France" is familiarly specified on the modern stage, although such effects are certainly here in plenty. Rice uses stage depth brilliantly: Manon's Parisian success is celebrated in an elaborately self-conscious scene combining *tableau vivant*, play-within-play and circus machinery; reunited with Manon, Des Grieux begins and ends his short gambling career in a vaulted casino sumptuously appointed in Las Vegas Gothic.

But to what avail are all these expensive recreations of depth in the two-dimensional Massenet world? *Manon* will never be "deep" in any psychological sense and will forever gesture touchingly towards a tragic vision that it cannot attain. Yes, we must turn to *La traviata* if we want to see tragedy proper being extracted from the stereotypes of the fallen woman and the prudential class-conscious male. Where Verdi finds profundity in a slight work of French literature, Massenet finds unswerving slowness in one of its masterpieces.

What would young Leiris have made of this production? His "tetable" is perfectly enunciated by Julia Migenes, and from bedroom table to communion table to gambling table a delicate interconnecting thread of suggestion still runs. But for the rest we're in a world where each word has a single meaning and each commodity a stable price. Indeed we're in a timeless bourgeois utopia: Manon's face is still her fortune, and Massenet's melodies are still his.

its metaphorical power in the lives of all of them beautifully underlined by the film's own detail and richness of visual metaphor - is more than sufficient to support the illusion that they can and do. It provides a veil through which facts which might otherwise prove disruptive can be safely filtered into everyday life. The main thing, for Doña Herlinda and her dependants, is that everyday life must carry on.

Hermosillo made his first feature in 1971; *Doña Herlinda* itself was made with the students and teachers of the recently instituted Western Film and Critic Centre at Guadalajara. Light satirical comedy as it is, the film can be firmly located within a leftist tradition in Mexican cinema. Its political seriousness, for a Mexican public, resides precisely in its portrayal of some of the particular means by which a status quo in Mexico is maintained.

We see an officially approved and emblematic "Mexicanism" - the brief appearance in the film of Orozco's murals of the mid-1930s in a gratuitous - working in tension with the products and benefits of the consumer culture from north of the border. One, stimulating cultural pride and appearing to satisfy the need for a sense of national cohesion and identity, serves to sanction the other, to mask any misgivings about the effects of the North American capital and expertise on which, in reality, Mexico's economy is largely dependent. In *Doña Herlinda*, as in the history of modern Mexico, this post-revolutionary "Mexicanism" can be a powerful agent, operating together with (and as part of) the ethics of Western consumerism, to disguise and contain such forces for change, sexual or political, as do exist.

In finding, in well-observed daily life, dead-end accurate metaphors for operations which take place on a national scale, Hermosillo reveals himself to be a very considerable film-maker. Beneath the appeal which Doña Herlinda will certainly have for European audiences, it has much to tell us about what is, after all, a Third World country, about the way this country's history has been shaped and is being lived out by its bourgeoisie. The Hermosillo season at the NFT (continuing until June 28) offers similarly telling and necessary insights.

Colour coding

Frances Spalding

Winifred Nicholson
Tate Gallery, until August 2
WINIFRED NICHOLSON
Colour: Paintings, letters, writings
11pp. Faber, £30.
011 14952

Winifred Nicholson claimed that her "Mugshot" painted itself. Given a pot of lilies of the valley wrapped in tissue paper, she placed it on the sill of a window overlooking a lake and mountains in Switzerland. By painting the lilies grey she made radiant the inner wall of the paper case. Within its blunt folds one leaf glows like a green flame inside an iceberg. For some years the artist thought it a work she had not surpassed. Later still, after she and her husband Ben Nicholson had separated, she felt it expressed her idea of marriage: "Love and the secret lovely things that it holds." Shown at the start of this first full retrospective of her work at the Tate Gallery, it establishes her interest in colour and light, the forward far and the interrelatedness of things.

In fact, the show begins in the corridor outside. In one of two watercolours for her grandnephew, George Howard, Earl of Carlisle, painter and friend of the Pre-Raphaelites, Winifred and her sister sit beside their mother, Lady Gertrude Roberts, who is shown painting. If this suggests the cultured, aristocratic ambience in which she grew up, equally important was the idealism inherited from her grandmother, Countess of Carlisle, and from her father, Charles Roberts, who was Liberal MP for Lincoln for fifteen years and chaired Cumberland county council during the last twenty years of his life. Winifred Nicholson's respect for progressive political ideas aligned with the "modern movement" and its ideology when she lived in Paris in the 1930s. "How

young we were!" she wrote, looking back on this period, when clarity and simplicity, in art, architecture and design, were the guiding concerns, and "salvation from all the chaos of civilization" was to be found in a Bauhaus steel chair, a Basque tablecloth or an abstract painting.

A third of the exhibition is devoted to early work produced before her move to Paris in 1933; thoughtfully selected, it makes a superb display. Economy of means is combined with a fullness of statement. The movement of her



Winifred Nicholson, c 1929, with her painting "Flower Table: Pansies", from the book, *Unknown Colour: Paintings, Letters, Writings by Winifred Nicholson*, offers insight into her use of colour. Arguing that the Old Masters "nailed" colour to objects, she sought a more abstract use that would set it free, to radiate or withdraw, merge or change through juxtaposition with another. She believed one could draw up a colour chart equivalent to a composer's keyboard and that a certain red and green created a perfect fifth in musical terms, affecting the eye as a hunting call does the ear. "Colour", she asserts, "is one of the surest means of

brush is in intimate connection with what her eye sees, which invites the conclusion that she painted instinctively. This is disproved by evidence of compositional forethought, glimpsed occasionally in the pencilled arcs underlying, and in one case overlying, her paintings, estab-

Changing places

Hilary Spurling

ALAN AYCKBOURN
Small Family Business
Civic Theatre

Alan Tagg's set for Alan Ayckbourn's new play is a doll's house with the front off, four rooms furnished from stock (the family business in question is furniture) so as to represent any one of four different houses separately, successively, or, as the plot thickens, all at once. This is the kind of set which, by the approach of the second-act climax, can comfortably hold an emergency conference in one house and a night exchange in a second, while a private detective (Simon Cndell, making the most of a tiny space, a drier mind and horribly inhibited movements) plods from room to room in a methodically checking for occupants who narrowly elude him in what is, from his point of view, probably an empty building.

Like so many of Ayckbourn's stage devices, this one is elegant, economical and highly efficient. Even empty, it has the inviting air of a play waiting to creak, twitch and scuttle into action. The figures may be on the scruffy floor - perpetually caught with their trousers buttoned, down or off - but the mechanism requires confidence. As in all the best farces, good and embarrassment are the primary fuels on which these people run. But where, say, Ayckbourn's characters are driven by greed which they struggle feebly to suppress, being easily blocked by embarrassment, Ayckbourn's learn triumphantly to ignore the first. Ayckbourn's characters are innocents in the world played with good intentions. There are no self-deceptions in Ayckbourn. It is innocent itself that is venal, culpable and inevitably bound to cause trouble.

What is irresistible is the fact that - like Pinocchio's wooden adulterers, snobs and murderers a century ago - Ayckbourn's suburban characters are instantly recognizable. Their particular brand of short-changing belongs, as much as

expressing joy." The book also offers a glimpse into her friendship with Kathleen Raine and the criticism she exchanged with Ben Nicholson, with whom she corresponded all her life. When Ben Nicholson makes experiments which lead up to his white reliefs, he tells her, "there is a clear light in several and some v. simple living things which you have especially given me". She in turn readily acknowledges her debt to him: ten years of companionship with "an all-time painter, working in the medium of classic eternity", is, she says, better than "a lifetime with a second-class person".

Together, the book and the exhibition (which will travel to Newcastle, Bristol, Stoke-on-Trent, Aberdeen and Cambridge) affirm that this artist, until now known chiefly as Ben Nicholson's wife, occupies a central position in twentieth-century art. Her exchange of ideas and influence with Ben Nicholson and Christopher Wood begs further investigation, as does her contribution to the avant-garde in Paris, where she befriended other artists, among them Mondrian, Gabo and Giacometti. Until the embargo is lifted on other of her own and on Ben Nicholson's papers, the full importance of her life and work will remain obscured. All the more poignant, therefore, is the page from a Ben Nicholson memoir, exhibited here, confirming the inspiration he gained from working with her.

The latest artist to take part in the "Artist's Eye" series of exhibitions at the National Gallery is Lucian Freud. Freud demands of a painting that it "astonish, disturb, seduce and convince", and has chosen, according to these criteria, two of his own paintings to hang alongside twenty-seven by other artists. They include Rubens's "Samson and Delilah", Seurat's "Bathers at Asnières", Constable's "Hay Wain", Cézanne's portrait of his father, plus works by Rembrandt, Velázquez, Ingres and Degas. The exhibition runs until August 16.

FRANCESCO ROSI PRESENTS
A FILM BY FRANCESCO ROSI

CHRONICLE

—OF A DEATH FORETOLD—

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P. P. BOBER and R. O. RUBINSTEIN
Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture: A
handbook of sources
522pp. Oxford University Press and Harvey
Miller. £45
0 199210292

GUNTER SCHWEIKHART
Der Codex Wolffegg: Zeichnungen nach der
Antike von Amico Aspertini (Studies of the
Warburg Institute, Volume Thirty-Eight)
133pp. Warburg Institute, University of
London. £30.
085481 064 1

Renaissance attitudes to the antique were often very different from those of subsequent ages. Mantegna's most prized possession was probably the bust of a Roman empress which he referred to as "la mia cara Faustina de marmo antica". In 1506, a matter of months before his death, he was bullied into selling it to Isabella d'Este, the wife of his master Francesco Gonzaga. And, since what is almost certainly the piece in question has survived, we can say that the foremost antiquarian among quattrocento painters and one of the most remarkable patrons and collectors of the period were fighting over a work of outstanding mediocrity. It is one of the supreme merits of these two books, both long-awaited offshoots of the Warburg Institute and New York Institute of Fine Arts' *Census of Antique Works of Art Known to Renaissance Artists*, that they not only help us to see what the artists looked at, but also explore how and why they looked.

The Bober and Rubinstein volume has already achieved that ultimate accolade, reserved for such standard works of reference as Liddell and Scott and Lewis and Short, of coming to be known simply by the names of its authors. They remark that "selection has not been easy", surely something of an understatement considering that in order to produce their *magnum opus*, they have been obliged to squeeze the fruits of nearly forty years of research on the *Census* into a single book. P. P. Bober and R. O. Rubinstein follow the *Census* in making the Sack of Rome in 1527 their convenient, if arbitrary, cut-off point for discoveries, while unlike it they confine themselves to monumental sculpture, in effect mainly statues and reliefs. All but the most significant coins, gems and small bronzes are excluded, presumably because of lack of space, but ostensibly on the dubious grounds that "such material would lead us into antiquarian concerns best left for a

different context". No less debatable is the omission of portrait busts, including such celebrated examples as Mantegna's "Faustina" or the Venetian "Vitellius", which Tintoretto drew more than once, and even inserted as a head in the crowd of his "Christ before Pilate" in the Scuola di San Rocco.

In the end, however, Bober and Rubinstein is far more important for what it contains than for what it excludes. After a thoughtful introduction, there follows the catalogue, which is divided into two parts, Greek and Roman Gods and Myths, and "Roma Triumphans" - Roman History and Life. Both parts are organized thematically, and in addition the individual entries are split into various sections: title, description, history, representations, literature and other examples of the type known in the Renaissance. For art historians this vast body of information, much of it completely new, is invaluable. It reveals any number of specific borrowings from minor figures on obscure sarcophagi, but also leads one to make one's own connections. It would appear, for example, that the type of horse from which an Amazon is dismounting in a group once in the Palazzo Santacroce in Rome inspired portrayals of a fallen horse by artists as diverse as Jean Fouquet and Polidoro da Caravaggio. But Bober and Rubinstein goes beyond such particularities of source-spotting to provide the possibility of a real understanding of a whole repertoire of forms.

By contrast, Gunter Schweikhart was faced with a considerably less daunting but also less rewarding task. Following on from Phyllis Pray Bober's *Drawings after the Antique by Amico Aspertini: Sketchbooks in the British Museum* of 1957 (Volume Twenty-one in the same series), his subject is the Codex Wolffegg, an early work of the eccentric Bolognese artist Amico Aspertini, executed around 1500. Schweikhart convincingly presents the Codex as an intensely organized compilation, certainly not drawn directly from the objects, and most probably made for but never delivered to a patron rather than meant for workshop use. His identification and discussion of the items illustrated is highly professional, but there is little consideration of wider issues. After all, Aspertini was a painter as well as an archaeologist, and it is tempting to suggest that his frequent division of pages into taller upper fields and smaller lower fields may have been prompted by the traditional relationship between main panels and predellas found in Renaissance altarpieces. It is a pity such speculations seem so far removed from the world of this book.

States and impressions

Peter Murray

ANDREW ROBISON
Piranesi: Early architectural fantasies: A
catalogue raisonné of the etchings
214pp. University of Chicago Press. £55.25.
0 226 72319 4

This is very much a book for specialists, since it deals in great detail with a mere forty-four of the early prints of Piranesi, thus excluding all his famous views of Rome and most of his archaeological reconstructions. The introduction contains fifty-six illustrations of comparative material, mostly by Piranesi himself, but including valuable comparisons with prints by the Bibiena family, Marco Ricci and Tiepolo. The body of the book is taken up by a catalogue raisonné of the forty-four prints, each of which is illustrated in several states (some being entire reworkings) and a small number of full-size details. Almost all the prints are reproduced either to 60 per cent or 40 per cent of their actual size, but because of the method of reproduction they appear rather lifeless. However, since the book will be, in the main, used by people familiar with the originals this is not so serious a drawback as it might be. The prints discussed are the *Prima Parte di Architettura* (twenty), first published in 1743; the four *Grotteschi*, 1747-9; four single prints (catalogue nos 25-28), including one (27) made from two plates rediscovered in the 1960s but apparently

never printed by Piranesi himself; and the two editions of the *Carceri*, 1749-50 and 1761, the second containing two new plates as well as very extensive reworkings of the original fourteen (catalogue nos. 29-44).

The details given in the Catalogue concern not only physical changes to the plates but also observations on ink, paper and variations of printing technique within the same state. In general the earlier plates are printed with lighter, brownish inking and the later ones are darker and, of course, more heavily worked. A point not raised by Andrew Robison is that prints by Piranesi are far easier to come by than those by his teacher, Giuseppe Vasi, or his successor, Luigi Rossini, which almost certainly means that he pulled more impressions from his plates than they did.

The analysis of the *Carceri* is particularly detailed and leads Robison to conclude, surely rightly, that what began as a Bibiena-type theatrical prison and developed into architectural fantasies became less related to the melodramatic idea of prisons and more archaeological as his interest in ancient Roman construction grew during the 1750s (the period of the *Antichità Romane*). It is easy enough to see that the second edition of the *Carceri* would be saleable, but who would have bought the extremely sketchy first versions of the "Drawbridge" (33) or "Arch with Shell" (37)? The catalogue is completed by drawings of some ninety-five watermarks, which, like the rest of the book, will be welcomed in print-rooms.



"Ariadne asleep", a drawing attributed to Pellegrino Tibaldi (1527-1596), in Michel Gaud's collection of Italian drawings from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century. The collection will be on sale at Sotheby's, Monaco, on June 20.

Fathering a fashion

Graham Reynolds

LUKE HERRMANN
Paul and Thomas Sandby
175pp. Batsford, in association with the
Victoria and Albert Museum. £14.95.
07134 4788 5

Paintings in watercolour have been an important part of British art for over two hundred years. There is no real parallel in any other Western country to the assiduity with which the medium has been cultivated here as a separate branch of art. Its favoured position has encouraged speculation on the reasons for so peculiarly national a predilection, and attempts to find out when and why it began. One of the more engaging theories associates its rise with the manufacture of the "Green Frog" service ordered from Wedgwood in 1770 by Catherine the Great of Russia for her palace "La Grenouillerie". Her aim, in English eyes, was "to improve the taste and polish the manners of her subjects without corrupting their hearts". She decided that the most effective way of achieving this noble aim was to instruct Wedgwood to decorate each single one of the 1,282 pieces of this vast service with a different view of the British countryside; ruins, gentlemen's seats, wild scenery. The manufacturers were hard-pressed to provide so comprehensive a range; they made what use they could of existing engravings, but had to employ draughtsmen to depict scenes which had hitherto not been recorded. John L. Roget, the historian of the "Old" Watercolour Society, believed that the demand created by this activity led to the flowering of the national school of watercolour painters.

Luke Herrmann refers in passing to the use of one or two of Paul Sandby's views for the "Green Frog" decorations, but does not need to spend time refuting Roget's theory. It has long since been abandoned, because there was demonstrably a strong group of watercolourists before 1770, and because the artists employed by Wedgwood were of inferior talent. But he does have to consider the question whether Paul Sandby deserves the title "father of English watercolour", so long bestowed on him: he concludes that Paul's elder brother Thomas Sandby is equally worthy of the accolade. Of course we can always search backwards for an earlier claimant. William Taverner, an amateur whose landscapes were coming into notice in the 1730s, was hailed as a prophet by Smollett: "If there is any taste for ingenuity left in a degenerate age fast sinking into barbarism this artist will make a capital figure". Paul Sandby, always a generous collector of other people's work, owned at least one landscape drawing by him. However, Thomas Sandby was a professional. He began as Military Draughtsman in the Ordnance Office, and then followed the Duke of Cumberland's career through the campaigns of Culloden and Flander to his appointment as Ranger of Windsor Great Park. His talent was accordingly fostered by a nice combination of official

employment and eminent patronage, but his creative abilities soon declined into those of the architectural designer. Paul Sandby, by contrast, was keen to entertain new ideas throughout most of his life. Professor Herrmann shows that his earlier ambition was as an oil painter and that Gainsborough's much-quoted eulogy of him as the only man of genius in England who could undertake real views from nature refers to those canvases of which so few are at present known. Paul Sandby worked regularly in body-colour as well as in transparent watercolours, he was a competent etcher, and he introduced the aquatint process into this country from France.

The decoration of the Imperial dinner-service emphasizes the heavy dependence of watercolour painters at that time on local topography. But Paul Sandby did not confine himself to the literal delineation of buildings and the countryside. He was a sympathetic observer of people and humanized his scenes by the introduction of relevant figures. The cement mixers at the Bayswater turnpike, the governess with her young charges on the North Terrace of Windsor Castle, fit naturally into their localities and sharpen the sense of actuality. The artist delights to render light shining on a medley of accurately observed foliage and enriches his drawings with convincing clouds and fine sunsets. As the author indicates, these embellishments on the conventionally topographical make him a forerunner of the Romantic landscape developed by, among others, Turner and Girtin. The art of watercolour had been so transformed by the end of the century that Paul Sandby lived to find himself out of fashion, a victim of his own success.

The author has found sufficient characteristic material in the Victoria and Albert Museum to support his assessment of Paul Sandby and his less studied brother Thomas, but admits that the collection is in no way comparable with that in the Royal Library at Windsor. His monograph is the fifth to be published in a series of which the expressed aim is to provide "a detailed catalogue of the Museum's holdings on individual artists". It is therefore surprising to find that it describes only seventy-five out of 250 drawings attributed to Thomas and Paul Sandby in the Print Room. It was found "impracticable" to catalogue more than a handful out of some 200 drawings in the Carr album, acquired in 1901. These are sketches rather than finished works, but so are a number of the drawings which it has been found practicable to include. The consequence is that two dozen early studies of the Scots, so important in view of the place figures take in Paul Sandby's developed drawings, are not even listed. He took an animated interest in the encampments set up in the London parks during the Gordon Riots, but again only one of a group has been included. Drawings connected with Thomas Sandby's major architectural achievement, the design of the Old Freemasons' Hall, now demolished, have also been omitted. This is hardly the way to provide a complete catalogue of the national holdings of two of our more significant artists.

Fifty years on: answers to Ayer

John Foster

GRAHAM MACDONALD and CRISPIN WRIGHT
(Editors)
Fact, Science and Morality: Essays on A. J. Ayer's "Language, Truth and Logic"
246pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £27.50.
061 14535 9

Empiricist philosophy is traditionally founded on two main doctrines, one setting a restriction on the scope of human thought, the other a restriction on the scope of human knowledge. The first doctrine is that the content of human thought is entirely drawn from empirical materials (materials supplied by experience). The second is that, apart from those truths which we can establish by logic and conceptual analysis alone, human knowledge is entirely dependent on empirical evidence (evidence supplied by experience). In 1936, a book appeared in which, in effect, these doctrines were fused into a single principle - a principle which defined the scope of human thought in terms of the scope of human knowledge. The book was *Language, Truth and Logic*; its author the youthful A. J. Ayer.

The empiricist principle which Ayer espoused - the principle of verifiability - redefined the domain of genuine propositions, or significant statements, to two categories: those which are "analytic" (which are true in virtue of their meaning alone and are thus devoid of factual content), and those (the "empirically verifiable") which are in principle amenable to empirical tests. Ayer's contention was that while the truths of logic and mathematics can be assigned to the first category and our ordinary and scientific assertions about human nature and the physical world to the second, the pronouncements of metaphysics fall into neither and are thus to be dismissed as non-sensical. The impact of this contention, and of the bold and incisive way in which he elaborated it, was astonishing. I doubt if any piece of philosophical writing this century has been so widely read or provoked more discussion and controversy.

Fifty years on, and to celebrate its half-century, this new collection of original essays, *Fact, Science and Morality*, edited by Graham Macdonald and Crispin Wright, is the latest testimony to Ayer's first book's continuing influence and appeal. Most of the essays are not directly exegetical, and in some the connection with *Language, Truth and Logic* is not stressed; but each, in its way,

focuses on some position which Ayer defended or on some important issue which he raised. Although there is some variation in the quality of thought and expression, the collection as a whole meets the very high standards which, by teaching and example, Ayer himself has done so much to promote. I shall only comment on two of the essays - the two which bear most closely on Ayer's main contention. But this should not be taken to mean that I find the others less interesting.

Relying on his empiricist principle, Ayer claimed that metaphysical assertions were non-sensical, because they were neither analytic nor empirically verifiable. For this claim to succeed, two things are required: first, the conditions for empirical verifiability have to be fixed in such a way that metaphysical assertions fail to satisfy them; second, some argument has to be provided for accepting the empiricist principle. How does Ayer stand in these two respects?

On the first point, his basic idea was that a statement would count as empirically verifiable, and hence as factually significant, if and only if it either was an observation-statement or, in conjunction with observation-statements or with other statements whose verifiability could be independently established, had observational consequences. But despite an ingenious attempt in his introduction to the second edition, he never managed to turn this idea into something which was both precise and sufficiently restrictive for his anti-metaphysical purposes. Nor, indeed, did he make clear exactly what notion of empirical verifiability he was trying to define. The issues here, in both their philosophical and technical aspects, receive a thorough and perceptive treatment in the essay contributed by Crispin Wright. Having criticized Ayer's proposal and the various amendments proposed by other sympathetic critics, Wright offers his own definition of empirical verifiability, which he thinks will both serve Ayer's anti-metaphysical purposes and accord with what at least "some" widely read or provoked more discussion and controversy.

As to the second point, Ayer's rationale is simple and attractive; and if we grant his assumption about the nature of the project (the provision of a form of "verificationist realism"), I think that it is the best solution to be offered so far. Leaving aside the issue over Ayer's intentions, my only reservation is that, as far as I can see, it does not deal adequately with cases in which a metaphysical

notion are integrated into a single concept.

On the second point, Ayer is in deeper trouble. Not only does he fail to provide any argument in favour of his principle of verifiability (he simply develops a systematic philosophy on its basis), but as critics were quick to point out, it seems that, once it has been adequately formulated (so as to be effective in excluding metaphysics), the principle itself is neither analytic nor empirically verifiable and thus denies its own significance. Nor is this the only respect in which Ayer's position might be thought paradoxical. For Michael Williams argues persuasively that, whether or not the principle as such is self-defeating, Ayer's use of it, guided by his radically empiricist conception of what methods of verification are possible, is metaphysically loaded and leads him to embrace forms of reductionism which, despite being dressed up as specimens of conceptual analysis, involve a metaphysical view of how things really are.

Williams goes on to suggest a different strategy for eliminating metaphysics, and one which divides into two parts. On the one hand, we are to employ the "deflationary" techniques of Pyrrhonian scepticism and linguistic analysis with a view to dissolving metaphysical disputes one at a time - techniques which, though relying on rationality and sound judgment, do not presuppose any general philosophical doctrines, such as Ayer's empiricist principle. On the other hand, to the extent that metaphysics can resist this onslaught or rise phoenix-like from the ashes, we are to look to the empirical disciplines of psychology and history to explain why, in our unreconstructed state, we are (irrationally) disposed to take metaphysics seriously. I find this more ingenious than convincing. I do not believe that the deflationary techniques could do more than clear away the worst extravaganzas of metaphysics (like the sort that Carnap criticizes in Heidegger); and if metaphysics can withstand the attacks of the deflationist, and of any other philosophical critic, it has nothing to fear from the investigations of psychology and history, so long as these are conducted in an impartial way.

To be fair to him, Williams only commends his anti-metaphysical project to us as something which is "neither inherently paradoxical nor wildly implausible". But even this qualified endorsement seems unwarranted - though no doubt Williams will retort that, as a committed idealist, I am not well placed to make an impartial judgment on the matter.

It is also quite possible to tell sociobiological stories about the evolution of dispositions which are entirely compatible with the view that altruistic motives are sometimes the proximate causes of action.

A second weak point also concerns the notion of identification. Whatever one thinks of the possibility of altruism as a motive, it is abundantly clear that altruism in the sociobiologists' sense occurs in human beings. Badcock proposes identification as the psychological mechanism to explain this, and wishes to make the link with biological theory through the concept of kin altruism, whereby one organism promotes the perpetuation of (some of) his own genes through helping the reproductive success of relatives. Human altruism through identification is said to be a generalization of this phenomenon.

The trouble is that the theory of kin altruism involves a cost-benefit analysis. The fewer the genes the beneficiary shares with the altruist, the less the altruist will do for him at a given cost. But we sometimes make great sacrifices for others who are not related to us. We can identify even with members of other species; from the point of view of natural selection this last propensity would seem dangerous to us.

The *Problem of Altruism* is full of ingenious speculation, and as such, it offers a certain amount of enjoyment, but for an appreciation of how very difficult it is in the present state of knowledge to draw well-founded conclusions about human nature from evolutionary biology, readers should turn to Philip Kitcher's excellent book *Vaulting Ambition* (reviewed in the TLS, January 3, 1986).

REVUE DE L'ART

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Journal de l'Art

Among the sources of Islam

W. F. Madelung

HUGH KENNEDY
The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the sixth to the eleventh century
 424pp. Longman. £22 (paperback, £12). 0582493129

The period from the seventh to the eleventh century comprises the formative age of Islam and Islamic civilization. Politically, it witnessed the great expansion of the Arab Muslim empire under the Rashidun and the Umayyad caliphs, the splendour of the early 'Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad and its gradual decline and dismemberment through the rise of independent and semi-independent dynasties throughout the Muslim empire - culminating in the establishment of the Fatimid counter-caliphate holding sway over the Maghreb, Egypt and Greater Syria. The age drew to a close with the coming of the Seljuq Turks, who reunited the eastern and central territories of Islam and for a time reduced the 'Abbasid caliphs to religious figureheads by setting up their own sovereign sulatane.

Hugh Kennedy's book, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, offers an attractive introduction to the history of this period. It is, to be sure, essentially a political history: the reader gets little sense of the intellectual and cultural achievements of the time. There is only a brief reference to that "Renaissance of Islam", as it has been called, which accompanied the decline of the caliphate in the tenth century. As the subtitle indicates, it is, moreover, restricted to Islam in the Near East and thus excludes the history of the western Islamic world of the Maghreb and the Iberian peninsula. This limitation was evidently suggested by the inclusion of the volume in a series dealing with the history of the Near East since the rise of Islam. The biography of the prophet Muhammad, the history of his first successor and to some

extent also of the Umayyad caliphate, have been the subject of much controversy among modern historians. This has resulted from the fact that the earliest written Muslim sources for this period date only from the 'Abbasid age, a century and a half after the death of Muhammad, and themselves reflect contradictory interpretations of events. Partisan rewriting in the light of later developments, conflicts and interests is often evident. Western historians have viewed these sources with widely varying degrees of scepticism. In the early decades of the century, H. Lammens presented a radically revised story of the rise of Islam and the Umayyad caliphate based on the claim that even the Sunni sources were largely distorted by 'Abbasid and Shi'ite partisanship. His slanted attack on the credibility of the *Sira*, the Muslim account of the life of Muhammad, was challenged by others. More recently, some historians have proposed substantial reinterpretations of various aspects founded on the assumption that the authors of the extant written sources no longer understood some of the terminology of the earlier reports and of the historical circumstances reflected in them. Some have gone further to argue that the Muslim sources concerning the origins of Islam cannot be trusted at all, and that in view of the meagreness of contemporary non-Muslim sources its early history must remain mostly speculative.

Against these revisionist views, Kennedy takes a conservative position. He holds that "in the main, the early Muslim sources are, within their limitations, an accurate reflection of the events that took place . . . In the final analysis, the idea that anyone in the . . . eighth

century could have systematically forged or invented so vast, diverse and circumstantial a body of evidence is simply unbelievable." His narrative account of events thus follows fairly traditional lines, though the heavy moralistic censure characteristic of some older Western historiography on Islam has given way to generally positive or neutral reporting.

The chronological account is accompanied by an analysis of long-term factors and developments, especially of a social or economic nature, which affected the course of events. Here the author makes selective use of recent historical and archaeological research by various scholars. Quite a few interpretations, however, especially concerning the history of the 'Abbasids and the later successor dynasties, are his own. The constraints of space in a general survey obviously did not always allow him to develop and document these as they would deserve. There are perceptive discussions of tribal movements and the antagonism between nomads and settled people, of the conflicting motivations of the various ethnic elements in the caliphal armies, of the role of Turkish slave troops, and of the structural differences of the states set up by various groups: the Daylamites, Turks, Kurds, Arab bedouin tribes.

Less attention is devoted to the analysis of religious and ideological factors and developments bearing upon the political events, and some of Kennedy's interpretations in this respect are definitely amiss. Thus his suggestion that Sunnism and "Twelver" Shi'ism took definite shape and became irreconcilably opposed to each other only under the Buyids in the later tenth and early eleventh centuries,

when communal fighting between them erupted in Baghdad, is untenable. Twelver, or Imami, Shi'ism became sectarian in the early eighth century, and some of the practices and beliefs which he describes as new among Shi'ites of the Buyid age can be traced back to this period. The efforts of the caliph al-Mamun (813-33) to reconcile the 'Abbasids and the 'Alids failed partly because the Sunni and Shi'ite religious positions were already too deeply entrenched. The communal fighting in Baghdad under the Buyids did not reflect a new sectarian division but the weakness of government and the more vigorous self-assertion of the Shi'ite community backed by the Daylamites against the Sunnites, who were favoured by the Turks.

The significance of the official creed issued by the caliph al-Qadir in 1020 is misjudged when it is described as the first explicit and positive definition of Sunnism, which had previously been merely negatively defined by its opposition to the claims of the Shi'a. The creed of al-Qadir rather falls wholly within the long line of traditionalist Hanbalite creeds formulated since the time of Ahmad b. Hanbal. Sunni beliefs had been defined in positive terms for a long time before al-Qadir, but there were definitions of Sunnism at variance with the traditionalist Hanbalite creeds. Al-Qadir's creed was partly motivated by his hope of gaining the support of the Hanbalite community, which predominated in Baghdad but was insignificant in the rest of the Islamic world. Implicitly repudiating even Ash'arism, which later became the predominant theology of Sunni Islam, that creed cannot be viewed as formulating a broad concept of Sunnism.

There are of course weaknesses as well as strengths in the book. Although there is a great deal of cross-referencing, there is little systematic integration of "studies" which were clearly written over a considerable period of time. And whereas Hendy is evidently master of the sources for the later Byzantine Empire, quite a lot of his comments on its earlier period give the impression of an extremely able commentary on the recent work of other scholars. He simply does not know the primary material, literary or numismatic, well enough at first hand. This becomes immediately clear from his nebulous account of fifth-century coinage, through whose complexities no reliable exposition exists to guide him. Hendy argues that one cannot "understand" any period without understanding its precursor. Fair enough, but if Anastasius is not to be understood without Diocletian, it is important to be clear, in starting at his reign, in what ways exactly the latter was innovative, and how far he comprehended and was in control of the circumstances of his time. In my view, it was brave, but over-ambitious, to tackle the fourth and fifth centuries in so much detail, and the attempt to understand and explain them systematically has not come off.

The plates seem to have been something of an afterthought. They certainly provide a useful picture-gallery of the late Roman and Byzantine coinage, though the author has been indifferently served by his photographer. The trouble is that there is no integration with the text, which presumably accounts for the otherwise inexplicable omission of seals, a surprising failure in a book which constantly and rightly insists on the importance of the totality of the evidence. On a more purely numismatic note, I missed any real discussion of the policy of overstriking bronze coins on older types, a feature of the early seventh century and of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Were the old coins discounted or even demonetized? What mechanism brought coins back to the mints? Are there hints in our literary sources, or evidence from hoards? And if not, there are certainly earlier and later parallels which it would have been relevant to explore.

But when all is said and done, the formidable impact of Hendy's scholarship remains. He has given us a book of massive erudition and lasting value, and if it is also a bit self-indulgent, the author can be excused, for with him Byzantine studies have taken a decisive step forward.

67 TLS June 1987

The emperor of humbug

Richard Clogg

JOH HALLIDAY (Editor)
The Artful Albanian: The memoirs of Enver Hoxha
 394pp. Chatto and Windus. Paperback, £5.95. 07111 29700

When Mikhail Gorbachev took over the reins of the Soviet Union he lost no time in turning his back on the Brezhnev era. Not so Ramiz Alia in Albania, who became first secretary of the Albanian communist party on the death of Enver Hoxha in April 1985. He swore at the time to remain true to the legacy of Hoxha and, so far at least, has kept his word. At last November's ninth party congress, for instance, Alia heaped lavish praise on Comrade Enver's immortal work, wise teachings and rich theoretical heritage which "inspire us at every moment and guide us in every step". Hoxha, he intoned, is the figure who "symbolizes and embodies the ardent love of country and dedicated revolutionary militancy, the popular wisdom and brilliant mind of the cultivated man, the modest son of the people and the outstanding statesman". This perpetuation of the Hoxha cult makes Jon Halliday's digest of Hoxha's various volumes of memoirs particularly timely, for they throw valuable light on the ethos and attitudes of the ruling élite of a country which, while it may appear no more than a quaint (if such an epithet can attach to a Stalinist tyranny) and anomalous backwater, is none the less firmly and necessarily embroiled in that most intractable, and potentially explosive, of Balkan problems, the Kosovo question. This has arisen because half as many ethnic Albanians live in the Kosovo region of Yugoslavia as in Albania proper and a not insignificant proportion of these would appear to favour the Stalinism of Hoxha and his epigones over the relatively relaxed communism of Yugoslavia. The key to Hoxha's appeal clearly lay in his absolute commitment to the Albanian nationalist cause, a commitment that clearly finds a sneaking favour even among some Albanian émigrés appalled by the nastiness of his régime.

A rough but none the less useful guide to the dimensions of the personality cult of a given dictator is the number of volumes of his collected works that have found their way into print. Kim Il Sung of North Korea must come close to holding the record and a few years ago full-page expositions of his "Suche" idea were a regular feature of the British press. Another cult of mammoth proportions is that of Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania (and of his wife, Elena, the holder of more than a hundred honorary doctorates in chemistry). When Ceausescu's *Am pentru oameni* was published in English a few years ago it was, not inaccurately but somewhat unfortunately, entitled "A man for all". Even Colonel Papadopoulos of Greece, usually far to the right-wing dictator, managed to rack up seven volumes of turgid and now mercifully hard-to-find prose, one for each year of his unimpaired régime.

Notwithstanding his death in April 1985, after ruling Albania with a rod of iron for over forty years, the collected works of Hoxha continue to roll from the presses and have now reached, at the last count, forty-seven volumes. Halliday has made his selection from six volumes of memoirs, *The Anglo-American Threat to Albania*, *The Titoes*, *With Stalin*, *The Khrushchevs* and the two volumes of *Reflections on China*, which are cast in the form of extracts from a diary that Halliday believes to be in the main genuine but which would at the least appear to have been written with a large measure of hindsight. What is in some ways the most interesting volume, *Laying the Foundations of the New Albania*, which was published in 1984 and covers the politics of the period of the Italian and German occupations and of the initial seizure of power, presumably appeared too late to be incorporated in Halliday's anthology.

All these volumes are put out by the Institute of Marxist-Leninist Studies of the Central Committee of the Albanian Party of Labour, conventionally headed for many years by Hoxha's wife Nexhmije, the Balkan propensity to institutionalized nepotism having proved perfectly compatible with communist government throughout the peninsula. For the most

part they are well and idiomatically translated and reflect the pungent and gossipy style of a political leader of some culture and of wide reading, as the tags in half a dozen languages which pepper his texts testify. The translations, indeed, do justice to the vitriolic invective to be expected from the man who once dismissed Nikita Khrushchev as "the greatest counter-revolutionary buffoon and charlatan the world has ever known" and wrote off the Yugoslav communist leader Vukmanovic-Tempo as a "Serbo-Jesuit". As Halliday points out, the propensity to lapse into invective is an all too common vice in the middle-class Marxist intellectual.

Scarcely a son of the people, Hoxha was in fact born into the family of a well-to-do Muslim landowner in Gjirokastra, in the then largely (Orthodox) Christian south, and he always retained, as did Tito, a narcissistic concern with his appearance. (The boots which he allegedly wore during his period as a wartime partisan leader and which are on display at his birth-place have a curiously unworn look about them.) On the strength of his studies at the French lycée in Korçe, Hoxha was awarded a government scholarship in 1930 to study at the University of Montpellier. Without taking a degree he soon drifted to Paris, where he joined the French Communist Party and wrote articles in *L'Humanité* denouncing the rule of Ahmet Zogu, the feudal chieftain who, in 1935, had himself crowned king of the "Albanians". Later he spent some time in Brussels, where he began to study law although once again he failed to graduate.

On his return to Albania, Hoxha taught for a time at his old school in Korçe before being dismissed for revolutionary agitation. Until the end of his life he manifested the zeal, extremism and limitless capacity for humbug of the student revolutionary. Characteristically, he placed a high premium on the redeeming qualities of manual labour (for everyone, that is, except himself) and it is noteworthy that the leadership of the Albanian communist party was at once the most extreme and the least working-class in its origins of any in Eastern Europe. (The only real proletarian to rise to a position of leadership in the early days of the party, Koci Xoxe, a tinsmith from Negovan, was eliminated as a Titoist in 1948, personally strangled by Hoxha's long-time henchman, Mehmet Shehu, or so Khrushchev was told by Tito.)

Despite Hoxha's disquieting capacity for the verbatim recall of long conversations that took place up to forty-five years previously (the editor is surely over-cautious in describing them as "inherently rather implausible"), the books, provided they are taken with an appropriate handful of salt, can be quite informative. As Halliday points out, Hoxha was at once mendacious and unusually frank. If, in *The Anglo-Albanian Threat to Albania*, Hoxha is understandably forthcoming about the degree to which the Albanian party was, from its earliest foundation, the creature of the Yugoslav party, there is much incidental detail about the role of the British liaison officers parachuted in by the Special Operations Executive to liaise with the Albanian partisans, and indeed with other resistance organizations. There is one extraordinary vignette of Hoxha, discussing with Brigadier "Trotzky" Davies, in the depths of a bleak Albanian winter, Jerome K. Jerome, Swift, Byron, Shelley and Kipling. Hoxha made the point to Davies that he was impressed on me by my own guide during a visit to Albania, namely that the Shakespearean translations of Bishop Fan Noli make Shakespeare "speak Albanian". Hoxha is inclined to play down the role of Philby in sabotaging the combined SIS-CIA effort to overthrow him in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and, instead, predictably emphasizes the crucial role played by the revolutionary vigilance of the Albanian people.

Throughout his writings, Hoxha manifests an unqualified enthusiasm for Stalin and all his works and some of the most interesting passages in Halliday's selection bear on his recollections of a post-mortem on the reasons for the defeat of the left in the Greek civil war that was organized by Stalin in Moscow in January 1950. At this meeting Stalin listened to Hoxha's catalogue of complaints against the Greek communists for their mishandling of the situation and of the apology (to which Hoxha gives

only a fraction of the space devoted to his own analysis) of Nikos Zachariadis, oddly described by Halliday as being the "new" head of the Greek communist party (he became general secretary in 1934) and even more oddly by Hoxha as being "very intelligent and cultured". Both sides appear to have been quite happy to accept Stalin's role as arbiter and, needless to say, Stalin plumped for the Albanian version, although he did clear Zachariadis of the accusation that he was a British agent.

If Stalin was unquestionably Hoxha's great hero, then Khrushchev was his greatest bugbear. *The Khrushchevs*, of which Halliday publishes substantial extracts, gives a detailed



Enver Hoxha at the May Day parade, 1976, in Thirana.

and necessarily one-sided, but on the whole plausible, analysis of the polemics and bitter feuding that culminated in the breaking-off of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1961. The one consistent thread in Hoxha's turning his back first on the Yugoslavs in the late 1940s, the Russians in the early 1960s and the Chinese in the late 1970s, was his overriding and ultimately successful concern to protect his own power-base, a policy conducted with a dexterity that was to ensure him a much longer period of absolute power than any other East European leader.

Naturally enough, Hoxha makes no mention of the real reasons for the break with the Soviet Union, namely the threat to his political, perhaps even to his physical, survival implicit in Khrushchev's determination to impose de-Stalinization on the East European satellites. Instead, he drones on about Soviet revisionism and "social imperialism" and is highly critical of the "Czarist" lifestyle of the Soviet leadership. His account of the earthy polemics between himself and Khrushchev has a certain verisimilitude, as when Khrushchev mocked Hoxha's effort to make Albania self-sufficient in wheat by claiming that Soviet mice consumed more wheat in a year than the Albanians could ever eat. Even at the height of his battles with Khrushchev, however, Hoxha did not abandon his cultural interests, and his Czech hosts must have been surprised by his determination when visiting Marienbad to see the house in which the aged Goethe had become besotted with the young Gretchen. How many other East European leaders can have had any knowledge of, or interest in, such matters?

Some of the most useful and telling information is in the detail of the memoirs. A case in point is Hoxha's visit to Romania in 1948. On getting into the Romanian party boss Gheorghiu-Dej's . . . armour-plated Zis limousine, Hoxha, himself no sluggard in matters of personal security, found an arsenal worthy of a Chicago mobster. He draws an entirely convincing picture of Gheorghiu-Dej, Ana Pauker (her hair cut short *à la garçonne*) and company covering like rabbits while professing to be in total control of the situation. Again, in the course of one of their many confrontations, a furious Khrushchev screamed at

Hoxha that only Harold Macmillan had dared to speak to him in such a manner. We also learn that as relations with the Soviet Union moved towards breaking point, one of the official Soviet complaints was that an Albanian child had peed near a building used by the Soviet submarine flotilla in Vlorë; childish, absurd but, alas, wholly plausible.

The last part of Halliday's anthology is given over to extracts from the *Reflections on China* published in 1979 in two volumes totalling over 1,500 pages. This appeared shortly (indeed suspiciously shortly) after the definitive break with the Chinese in 1978, when the seventh party congress had denounced "the anti-Marxist stand and counter-revolutionary actions of the Chinese revisionist leadership". It purported to be extracts from a political diary kept by Hoxha between 1962, by which time Albania's break with the Soviet Union and alignment with China had become overt, and 1977, when the covert doubts about the nature of Chinese revisionism and, in particular, the Chinese *rapprochement* with the Americans, which Hoxha purportedly had committed to his diary, had become increasingly open. In the diary he claims to have had doubts about the Chinese comrades almost from the beginning. In August 1966, for instance, at a time when Albania was publicly professing eternal friendship with China, we find him, without a trace of embarrassment, worrying that the Chinese were transforming the cult of Mao into a religion, despite Marx's denunciation of the cult of the individual. Ever vigilant to cast out the mote in the eyes of others, he is sublimely indifferent to the beam in his own. For his own personality cult was quite the equal of those of Mao, Ceausescu or Kim Il Sung, with the hill-sides of Albania being plastered with the slogan "Parli-Enver".

Halliday has skillfully extracted the essence from Hoxha's chatty, and frequently venomous, verbosity and has accompanied the text with eminently useful notes. He devotes a whole appendix to the mysterious affair of the "suicide" in December 1981 (and subsequent denunciation as an agent of the CIA, the KGB and of Yugoslav intelligence) of Mehmet Shehu, a veteran of the Spanish Civil War, Hoxha's right-hand man from a very early stage and prime minister from 1954 until his death. Only occasionally does Halliday get into a muddle. An instance of this is his claim that the British authorities during the Second World War were too busy pondering to the Greek "revanchists" (Hoxha's rhetoric is catching) to advocate the restoration of Albania's territorial unity at the war's end. Greece's claim to Northern Epirus may be overstated or unrealistic but can scarcely be dismissed as revanchist, as to this day there is a recognized Greek minority in the area. But more to the point Eden, as foreign secretary, in fact profoundly upset the Greek government-in-exile by his declaration in December 1942 that Britain looked forward at the war's end to a restoration of Albania to its pre-war boundaries.

The Artful Albanian is a good read in itself and also one from which a considerable amount can be gleaned, particularly with the aid of Halliday's critical apparatus, in which, among other things, he correctly identifies the sex of the long-serving Vlach member of the Politburo, Rita Marko. As we approach the last decade of the century, none of the territorial antagonisms and ethnic rivalries that made the Balkans the powder-keg of Europe in the first decade of the century show any sign of diminishing. Hungarians and Romanians are at each other's throats over Transylvania, Yugoslavs and Bulgarians over Macedonia, Greeks and Turks over the Aegean and, most explosive of all, Albanians and Serbs over Kosovo. So far the fact that most of these countries are under communist rule has prevented actual hostilities, but the potentially destabilizing effect of these various disputes cannot be over-estimated. Hoxha's memoirs provide a powerful insight into the extraordinary, if to a degree justified, paranoia on the part of the Albanians as to the threat posed to their survival by their neighbours and by the super-powers. They also afford a chilling glimpse of the kind of society that develops when half-educated student revolutionaries have the chance to put their grisly vision of an ideal society into effect.

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JESSICA ANDERSON
The Only Daughter
252pp. Penguin. £3.95.
0 14 006333 1

Mostly focusing on female characters and a female point of view, Ruth Park shows the avoidance of solitude, rather than its celebration, as a priority throughout *Missus*, the opening novel, set in the 1920s, to her *Harp in the South* trilogy. (The two "sequels" were published in 1948 and 1949.) Loneliness and the harshness of her marriage and environment drive Hugh Darcy's mother to madness and suicide, an awkward legacy remaining constantly at his side in the form of a crippled brother who embodies many female traits alien to Hugh himself. Much of the rest of the novel concerns his reluctant relinquishing of the Australian male life of roving work, boozing, whoring and mateship, under the fragile influence of his eventual wife, Margaret, who is desperate to avoid the bleak condition of rural spinsterhood. Though this action remains central, Park also traces the relationship of Margaret's parents back to its origins, covering a wide sweep of colonial history in the process. Such historical extensiveness, and Park's style of bold, almost omniscience, leave little scope for dramatization of the inner life of her characters. At its best is showing the emergence of Margaret and Hugh's marriage out of raw, bitter struggles with the developing Australian land. *Missus* has a Lawrenceian breadth of vis-

One of the writers in this new vein is Murray Ball, whose collection *The Drover's Wife* shows a lively inventiveness in finding new norms for fragmentary statement. Ball also emphasizes his rejection of the idiom of bush nationalism in the title story, which exposes the tragically romantic figure of the outback portrait as only a runaway suburban housewife who enjoyed caniping. When Ball does seem to fall back into the old fascination with wilderness and loneliness, it is with a new emphasis: The military trapper in "The Silence" finds that the plain experience of infinite space to the outback is of infinite silence; so "overwhelming language that in the end he 'couldn't stand

Such interrogations of language, and of the form and possibilities of the short story itself, are a central interest for Don Anderson, whose selection of recent short fiction for his anthology *Transgressions* results, he explains, from an "editorial soul" which "thirsted for experimental writing". Reprinting material published between 1983 and 1985, *Transgressions* is in some ways an interesting complement to *The Australian Short Story*, though it achieves only occasionally the simultaneous subversion of literary structures and dominant ideologies which Anderson seeks in his introduction. Barbara Brooks's cool, disconnected style in "Summer in Sydney" forces the reader to "wait for something still under the surface that meets inbetween the words", accentuating the drifting disaffection of the narrator. Elsewhere, the labyrinths and mirrors of experimental fiction proliferate, but sometimes loosely or self-indulgently employed. Traditional tactics may communicate with more concision – as for example in David Malouf's use of an intrusion by the supernatural to identify an emotional vacuum in "The Empty Lunch Tin". Other stories, such as Michael Wilding's hippy fable "I Am Monarch of All I Survey", suggest that if *Transgressions* does not always properly satisfy

Among the elect

GREGORY BLAKE SMITH
The Devil in the Dooryard
 336pp. Collins. £10.95.
 000 2231956

Meanwhile, Smith has introduced the (wins) sinister mother, who keeps a secret collection of biological freaks (including a two-headed mouse) preserved in formaldehyde, and a group of Amerindian activists which claims ownership of various former Indian territories, including Wheelwright's island. It is led by the namesake and putative descendant of King Philip, instigator of an uprising against the settlers during 1675-6. The novel reaches a climax when the claimants occupy the island, taking hostage Wheelwright and Hetty (the latter now presumably pregnant). Wheelwright's account of their four-day captivity is interspersed with extracts from the memoirs of another former Indian prisoner for several months during

This and many other aspects of contemporary Australian life are astutely assessed in Jessica Anderson's *The Only Daughter*. The novel presents a family as huge and complex as Ruth Park's in *Missus*, rife with marital infidelities, gossip and wranglings about wills. The extended family, however, offers a broad, diverse sample of Sydney society, and Anderson's heroine Sylvia, returning after a long stay in Europe, provides an ideal vehicle for examining it. Though renewing many of her affections for the city, Sylvia finds it sullied by "the money hunger that afflicts everyone", and by criminal property speculators who help their clients clamber towards coveted harbour views – Sydney society seems to make it "impossible to be honest" for any of her family. Lamenting the absence of "wholeness" and the sense of continuity she found in the "visible layers of history" in Europe, Sylvia explains in persuasive detail her decision to leave Australia and her lover. But she stays, perhaps because of a sense of impending loneliness, somehow heightened by awareness of her country, even in Sydney, "always . . . out there, at one's back". Never wholly clarified, her motives in some ways sum up a disposition in much of the fiction surveyed here, which finds the threat of isolation not only problematic but productive, a continuing narrative focus for Australian emotions and concerns.

Stepping south

RICHARD FORD
A Piece of My Heart
297pp. Collins Harvill. £10.95.
0002716224

A Piece of My Heart is also about a meeting of modes: Dirty Realism and Southern Gothic. The two men are to meet their destiny on an island in the river, an island not on any maps, whose proprietor is concerned to appear a quirky patriarch, perpetually spouting folk-wisdom and pawky self-aggrandisement, and

Deadly portraits

DORIS GRUMBACH
The Magician's Girl
 200pp. Hamish Hamilton. £10.95.
 0241 121140

The reader floats through pages of events in a New York City unlocated in time, until a signpost advises, "for those who were adolescents in the early thirties the high tor of drama was the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby". Yet Grumbach's description of the city leaves us without a sense of period — an effect which is doubly disconcerting in a Grumbach novel because, at her best, she can draw the single line which holds the full suggestion of expanded

Words in the Air

The clean air said: 'I was your home once but other guests have taken your place; where will you go who liked it here so much? You looked at me through the thick dust of the earth, and your eyes were known to me. You sang sometimes, you even whispered low to someone else who was often asleep, you told her the light of the earth was too pure not to point a direction which somehow avoided death. You imagined yourself advancing in that direction; but now I no longer hear you. What have you done? Above all, what is your lover going to think?'

And she, his friend, replied through tears of happiness: 'He has changed into the shade that pleased him best.'

PHILIPPE JACCOTTET
Translated by Derek Mahon

above their social station. And shortly before this denouement, but sure in outline of what will happen, Sam Newell returns north, his sentimental education enhanced. Like Ford's later work, *A Piece of My Heart* is a fluent novel with much in it, moment by moment, that is achieved, but it leaves as an aftertaste the slightest vestige of snobbery and bad faith.

form; she is a master of the quick sketch. When her narrative shifts to describing the specific, it soars.

Only one of the three survives Grumbach's contrivance to the end. This is the lesbian photographer Liz, whom Grumbach shamelessly models on the real-life Diane Arbus. Liz, it seems, is "the magician's girl who does not flinch" because she is the ultimate voyeur, one who achieves her own place in life by immortalizing human beings as grotesques. It's a pity that the novel leaves us certain that any one of Liz's pictures would be worth a thousand of Grumbach's words.

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J. H. C. Leach TLS 8th August 1986

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کتاب فی الجہل

London Antiquarian Book Fair

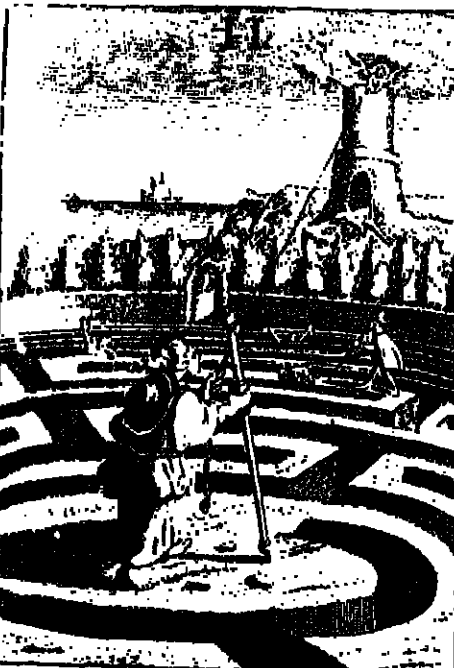
H. R. Woudhuysen

The London Antiquarian Book Fair will again be held this year in the Park Lane Hotel, Piccadilly. It will be opened on June 23 at 11 am by John Mortimer (apparently a Byron enthusiast), and will provide an opportunity for collectors and dealers to see about 30,000 books, manuscripts, letters, maps and prints offered for sale by seventy-three British and thirty-nine overseas dealers from ten different countries. This year's exhibitions consist of a demonstration of book restoring by the Salisbury binder Alan Winstanley, and a loan collection assembled by Hilary Sturt of bookmarks, which range from eighteenth-century vellum hand-illuminated corners for marking your place at the corner of a page to wartime bookmarks warning against the dangers of venereal disease.

The illustrated catalogue gives a good but rather specialized taste of what is available. It concentrates on the better and more lavish items on show and is not meant to convey the great diversity of material (some of it actually quite cheap), which can be picked up at the fair itself. If it is hard to say that there are many real bargains to be had there, it seems that remarkably few members of the trade inflate their prices for the occasion. Furthermore, despite the consistently excellent shows put on by the Provincial Book Fair Association there is almost no other opportunity in this country outside the London Antiquarian Book Fair to see so many different dealers with books of such high quality and interest.

The catalogue itself promises books from the sublime to the almost ridiculous. It is hard to know in which category the most expensive item in it belongs. This is a mid-nineteenth-century French Missal printed on vellum with eight full-page original miniatures, numerous hand-painted borders and other smaller decorations. It seems likely that only one copy of the book was ever printed and its binding is certainly unrepeatable being "set with diamonds, pearls, rubies, emeralds, amethysts, emerald pastes and a Renaissance cameo, against a background of red diced velvet". This extraordinary volume, produced at the height of French nostalgia for medievalism, is offered for sale by a West German dealer, Heribert Tenschert, for £260,000. Elsewhere other

bindings require a taste equally bizarre for their full appreciation: E. Joseph has a "Cosway" binding of 1903 with nine miniature portraits of female beauties on the upper covers of the two volumes of Foster's *Miniature Painters* for £15,000. There are "decadent" bindings of books by Oscar Wilde ("a semi-nude woman seated on a pillow, facing a mirror behind which is coiled a large serpent" painted on the vellum cover of *Poems*, 1909), offered for sale by ABI Books from California, and a rather remarkable eggshell lacquer binding of a cobra by Jean Dunand on a Paris edition of Kipling's *La Chasse de Kaa*, 1930 (\$45,000).



"that my tears were made so sweet that I might keep the Statute's Psalms"

"Labyrinth and Pilgrim", as depicted in *Plin Desideria*; or Divine addresses by Edmund Arwaker the younger, 1686. The pilgrim in the middle of the labyrinth holds a thread which links him to the guiding hands of Divine Love on the tower outside. The picture is reproduced from *An Index of Icons in English Emblem Books, 1500-1700* by Huston Diehl (258pp, with 25 illustrations. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press; distributed in the UK by Eurospan. £34.95, 0 8061 1989 6).

from Priscilla Juvelis of Boston).

The more straightforward literary items bear witness to the enduring popularity of fine printing and private press books as well as association copies. Heritage Bookshop of Los Angeles has the Golden Cockerel *Canterbury Tales* printed on vellum for £35,000, while a paper copy of the same edition is available from Harold M. Burstein and Company of Waltham, Massachusetts, for \$3,500; the five-volume Aldine Galen of 1525, the first printing of the Greek anatomist's works, is available from Howes Bookshop at £12,500. There are two attractive Edward Thomas items which further demonstrate how he has moved from being an enthusiast's author into big money: Blackwell's have the dedication copy of *Feminine Influence on the Poets*, 1910, inscribed to A. Martin Freeman for £1,200, while Thomas's own copy of W. Sawysland's *Familiar Wild Birds*, c.1890, is inscribed with his signature, the date 1895 (when he was seventeen) and the last sentence of Richard Jefferies's *The Amateur Poacher* (1880 from Gaby Goldscheider). Other association items range from Beckford to Palmerston, from Thomas Hughes to H. Rider Haggard. There are manuscripts of David Hume - his signed receipt of £40 for a year's salary as Librarian to the Faculty of Advocates (£1,000 from John Grant of Edinburgh) - and, unusually, of Tennyson: a single manuscript sheet "The Human Cry" from *De Profundis* at £850 from Eric J. Morten.

Finally there are also some refreshingly rare and genuinely interesting books, especially some good cookery books from Cooks Books and Dylans Bookstore (an extremely rare copy for £1,200 of *The Family Chronicle* published by T. Freeman at London in 1757); a scarce libertine novel, *Memoirs of an Oxford Scholar*, containing, *His Amour with the beautiful Miss L—, of Essex; And Interspers'd with Several Entertaining Incidents*, 1756, £850 from Stuart Bennett; and three works with relatively obscure imprints: M. and R. Glendale have a Russian book in three languages to teach German and French, issued at Riga in 1786 (1875); *Interesting Tracts Relating to the Island of Jamaica* was printed there at Spanish Town in 1800 (Reg and Philip Remington for £1,500), and even more exotically M. E. Korn has Caroline Gascoigne's poem 'Belgravia' printed at St George's Place, Hyde Park Corner in 1851, for £95.

Colonial collecting

Anthony Payne

JONATHAN WANTRUP
Australian Rare Books 1788-1900
468pp. Potts Point, NSW: Hordern House; distributed in the UK by Kegan Paul International. £95.
07103 02584

The scholar or collector of Australian books is fortunate in having at his disposal one of the best and most coherent national bibliographies. Sir John Ferguson's *Bibliography of Australia*, the first volume of which appeared in 1941. The greatest challenge any bibliographer must confront - that of inclusion and exclusion - was made easier in Ferguson's case by the fact that his nation is geographically distinct as an island continent and is politically a single unit. He was therefore spared the bewildering open-endedness of, for example, Joseph Sabin's *Dictionary of Books relating to America* (1868-1936). Moreover, by commencing his coverage in the 1780s and eschewing the early quests for *Terra Australis*, notably by the Spanish and the Dutch, and the imaginary voyages inspired by this supposed continent, Ferguson avoided tangential publications and ensured that his scope was confined to Australia as a "real" entity - that is the State which exists today and which is the direct descendant of the British colony established in 1788. Whatever the debate over convict origins, the significance of this date and the definition which it gives to Australian history and consciousness have not been seriously questioned by bibliographers.

Jonathan Wantrup's *Australian Rare Books 1788-1900* follows this tradition and begins

with the arrival of the First Fleet and its immediate successors, or, as he significantly calls them, the "Founding Fathers 1788-1806", followed by the "Turbulent Years" of Bligh and Macquarie, 1806-1823. There is no questioning why the British government should want to send a fleet of felons to a virtually unknown land on the other side of the world, a subject of vigorous debate among historians, nor of the various interests (whaling for instance) which sought to make the colony a viable commercial proposition rather than a drain on national resources and a strategic liability. Do the books published about Australia in this era throw any light on this problem? Would it be an interesting line for a collector to follow, to value his books for their potential historical insights rather than merely as symbols of an unquestioned sequence of events?

Three chapters deal with the exploration of the coasts and the wild interior of the continent after 1788 and one chapter deals with plate books, which reveal the impact of the new land's often strange and bizarre landscape and fauna on the imagination of the European artist.

To this central core are added succinct accounts of the "Art of Book Collecting" and "Anatomy for Book Collectors" and, most importantly, a detailed check-list of the 265 books discussed in the text. Approximately 100 of these notes reveal that Wantrup has added to or corrected Ferguson, not only on bibliographical minutiae, but also on points of substantial interest, for example the persuasive attribution of the text and aquatints of *Foreign Field Sports* etc. of the *Navies of New South Wales* to John William Lewin, the identification and description of the distinct issues of the atlas of Matthew Flinders's *Voyage to Terra*

Australis, and the 1810 reissue of John Hunter's *Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island*, none of which is even touched upon in the *Addenda* to Ferguson published in 1986 by the National Library of Australia. Indeed it could be said that *Australian Rare Books*, written by a private collector and issued by a private publisher, contributes more genuinely useful additions to bibliographical knowledge than the officially sponsored *Addenda*. Inevitably - and such discoveries are one of the great attractions of this subject - some of the author's comments will need revising, with (for example) the appearance at auction in May of this year of watercolours made with a camera lucida by Major James Wallis, which suggest that he was indeed the originator of the views in *An Historical Account of the Colony of New South Wales*, contrary to recent art-historical opinion reiterated by Wantrup.

Wantrup's book suffers from some infelicities of style and occasional repetition, both of which could have been rectified by judicious editing, and its index could be improved. More references to sources of information should certainly have been supplied and on balance the inclusion of prices for certain books is not sufficiently documented to give the reader a true idea of the broad range of a book's value. Nevertheless, *Australian Rare Books* is undoubtedly a shrewd enterprise on the part of the publishers, the pre-eminent antiquarian booksellers in Sydney, who have issued a book which provides an essential *va-de-mecum* for the novice and has a great deal to teach the specialist. Above all it is a tribute to the enthusiasm characteristic of this field of collecting in recent years and to the achievement of an exceptionally diligent collector.



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MICHAEL ANESKO
Friction with the Market: Henry James and the profession of authorship
258pp. Oxford University Press. £21.50.
019 5040341

REGENIA GAGNIER
Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian public
255pp. Aldershot: Scolar Press. £27.50.
085967 7303

Michael Anesko's *Friction with the Market* fixes on what the author takes to be a vacancy in Leon Edel's chronicle of Henry James's life and work: namely the Master's relationship with the commercial world of publishers. And he aligns this specific omission with the general misapprehension of James as wilfully above, or indifferent to, considerations of cash. The James of this vulgar error inhabits the Ivory Tower that was the subject of his last, unfinished work.

It is Anesko's intention to wrest James away from the false stereotype of a financially disinterested author. And to this end he opens with Edith Wharton's brutal observation that James—the despiser of books for the millions—wanted above all else to be “a best-seller” in the days when that odd form of literary fame was at its height. It is not, however, Anesko's purpose to replace the ivory tower with the even more banal image of sour grapes. With some delicacy, he contends that for James freedom was achieved less by withdrawal from the marketplace than by uneasy professional engagement, or “friction”. The easy step to this contention would be to go straight to the business history of how much he earned, in what form and from whom; the kind of nakedly informative narrative that R. L. Patten, for instance, supplies by the yard in *Dickens and his Publishers* (1978). Although he has such material to hand, Anesko withholds it for appendices. In the body of the book, he sets himself a more complex task: namely, finding the reverberations of James's professional stresses within the fabric of the novels. To this end he redraws Jamesian symbolic architecture in terms of the Albany library where the young Isabel Archer spends her leisure hours. Between the protected zone of Isabel's library and the hurly-burly of the street outside is an office where she finds it most comfortable to read. In this image, as Anesko argues: “James has constructed a model of his own professional situation. The ‘mysterious’ link between works of literature and their potential audience, between the sanctuary of culture (the library) and the vulgar street, is the market place (the office), a businesslike domain where values are filtered through a sole medium of exchange: windows papered in bank-note green.” Throughout the book, Anesko in this way reinvents James's frictions with the market back into James's fiction; a fiction dominated by the “drama of confrontation” between private art and public glory.

Over the length of James's career Anesko sees him as having developed a dual strategy. Of simultaneously playing the British and American markets. By combining the revenue of both, he was able to weld two small discerning readerships into one decently paying public with whom his relationship remained “creatively adversarial”. There were difficulties in this two-handed game. The American and British book trades as they had evolved in the early nineteenth century were structurally different and made opposite demands on an author. But in framing his international deals, James was peculiarly privileged by his own ambiguous nationality. There being no Anglo-American copyright agreement (until 1891), he, not his publisher, was able to make separate treaties as an English author in England and an American author in America. The pattern he devised was to sell transatlantic serial rights which normally made up the bulk of his income. Then book rights in various primary and secondary forms would be sold in both countries with an occasional bonus from Continental reprints. From all sources, income might add up to as much as seven or eight thousand dollars (divide by four for sterling) in good years.

James was not as unpopular a novelist as in later life he liked to claim. But he never broke through to that happy position where, as George Eliot put it, an author made enough money not to worry about money. In such things, even his protégées soon outdid him. He virtually wrote Mrs Humphry Ward's first novel (*Miss Bretherton*, 1883) for her. And James's publisher, Macmillan, gave a hundred-pound advance for it (about what he got). But for Ward's third novel, *The History of David Grieve* (1891), Macmillan gave £7,000 for the American rights alone—about what James earned from all sources for his fiction in the whole of the 1890s.

Because he never hit any jackpots, but nevertheless did well enough not to lose heart, James was an alert author, always responsive to new developments in the trade, as Mrs Ward complacently wasn't, after her early golden windfalls. And as Anesko shows, James's professional career was a constant manoeuvring for advantage against entrenched book-trade customs. Hence he was one of the first British-based authors to use a literary agent. He was, with Walter Besant and the Society of Authors, a main force for the innovation of the universal royalty agreement in the 1890s. But at the same time, in line with his awkwardly “frictional” attitude to such things, he declined to acquiesce in Besant's formulation of authorship as a trade and nothing more.

Anesko sometimes over-simplifies the Victorian British book trade, which he portrays as wholly antediluvian in 1876 when the young James came on the scene. Thus he writes: “When James arrived in the Anglo-Saxon literary capital, almost no Englishmen had ever signed royalty contracts with their publishers; few had ever received any payment in advance of publication.” In fact, by this date, the royalty payment was quite familiar. Writing to the young Hardy in March 1877, Trollope recommended it as the best agreement to be had. And, like other novelists, Trollope had routinely been receiving substan-

binders and booksellers, but also to identify the books which they bound and sold. In addition, he gives us, in *Durham Bookbinders and Booksellers 1660-1760*, rubbings of the tools that they used to decorate the bindings (which are presumably actual size, though this is not stated), so that examples can now be identified in other collections, as well as photographs (none too distinct, and plates 13 and 15 transposed) of characteristic examples of their work.

It is a pity that Pearson does not investigate more fully the actual binding techniques, other than decoration, and is not more precise in his terminology (what exactly does he mean by the word “millboard”?), but I hope his complaint about the historical damage done by the re-binding and rebacking of books in the library will be taken to heart by all librarians of such collections. It is not hard to think of libraries where such research is becoming increasingly difficult to carry out through the destruction of bindings by misguided attempts at “repair” (a

Casing and caring

Nicholas Pickwood
Durham Bookbinders and Booksellers 1660-1760
41pp. Oxford Bibliographical Society.
Paperback, £7.50.
0901420433

David Pearson's study of one hundred years of Durham bookbinding and selling would be welcome for no other reason than that it escapes from the refined world of fine binding, which has always dominated the history of binding. Instead, he turns his attention to the humbler artisans who tend, by their very nature, to be anonymous, but who were responsible for most of the books which fill the shelves of our libraries. By concentrating on the collection of Durham Cathedral Library and making full use of the cathedral and local archives he has been able not only to give names to the

tial advances on his fiction since the 1840s. All of which rather modifies Anesko's portrait of James in the 1870s and 80s as the “exponent for the professionalization of the literary vocation”. It is more the case that he coincided with changes which, as it turned out, were highly convenient to him professionally.

Of its kind, *Idylls of the Marketplace* is another impressive first book. Whereas Anesko opens dutifully with Leon Edel, however, Regenia Gagnier's introduction is principally an introduction to Guy Debord, Antonin Artaud, Jean Baudrillard, Peter Burger, Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno. Among this hyper-fashionable crew Oscar Wilde slides in sheepishly at the tail-end of things, as in Gagnier's thumping assertion: “I do not share Baudrillard's or Michel de Certeau's optimism about the revolutionary value of speech or gesture (nonverbal sign, usually ironic) for our fin de siècle or for Wilde's.” Intellectually it's not hard to see where Gagnier is coming from in such laying down of the literary law—Aestheticism 304D, the course which she teaches at Stanford and whose central importance to her project she indicates in her acknowledgements.

There is throughout *Idylls of the Marketplace* a sense that Gagnier has bigger, or more topical, fish to fry. Wilde serves merely as the point of entry to the current debate on “theory”. Thus a fortuitous conjunction between Bakhtin and Wilde is seized on with infinitive-splitting eagerness:

For this kind of language [that is, the language of Engels and Wilde], which deconstructed bourgeois categories of thought, one might use the term “dialogical.” In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin cites Wilde—“from Wilde's reviews of Dostoevsky—as one of the first readers to accurately understand Dostoevsky's most significant contribution to literary modernism, that is, what Bakhtin calls the “inner unfinalizability” of Dostoevsky's characters. Bakhtin calls this quality “dialogicality” or “polyphonicism” as opposed to the monologicality of traditional novels . . . This dialogically of double-voiced words amounts finally to what Debord calls the revolutionary and dialectical style of diversion, the style connecting Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx.

The route by which Wilde's mockery, initially and not entirely legitimately yoked with that of Friedrich Engels, is transported to Marx via deconstruction, diversion, Dostoevsky and dialogicality is baffling if one tries to map it in any

Inspired by the issues

John Adlard

MARY HAMER
Writing by Numbers: Trollope's serial fiction
199pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
0521 325285

In November 1860 Anthony Trollope promised to send a copy of *The Arabian Nights* to Kate Field and proposed to inscribe it “From the Author”. He had been working for almost exactly a year on his first novel in serial form, *Framley Parsonage*, and one might perhaps guess from that inscription that his serial writing was as much of an ordeal as Scheherazade's Thousand and One Nights.

Mary Hamer thinks otherwise. She tells us, in her illuminating new study, *Writing by Numbers*: “Trollope recognized that serial form brought out the best in him.” It provided “a paradoxically liberating experience . . . from which he made rich imaginative gains”. Before *Framley Parsonage* he had written eight novels in the standard three-volume form. Dr Hamer, having carefully examined his method in these earlier works, is left in no doubt. “Three-volume form as Trollope perceived it was a good deal worse than inappropriate: it was actually injurious.”

Writing serially, Trollope achieved a deeper, psychological penetration. He was “prompted” by the form, that is by a sense of its recurrent points of conclusion and its groupings of chapters, into a more dramatic presentation of his characters: individual speech, with its tones and cadences; rather than an authorial interpretation of the action directed the reader's response. “It was inevitable, of course, in the Victorian situation, that a conflict should arise between that conformist authorial voice and

pedestrian sense. But rhetorically, or ritually, Gagnier's game is plain enough. She is finding an appropriate company for Wilde to keep; dressing him up so that he is fit to make an entrance into the modern classroom.

Stripped of its modish gestures and Hall Marxisms, *Idylls of the Marketplace* is a persuasive and informative book. Gagnier starts from the commonplace that Wilde was a paradoxical artist whose literary manner oscillated symptomatically between the poles of romanticism and cynicism, sentimentality and satire. This oscillation, Gagnier argues, is to be understood by reference to Wilde's “audience[s]”, those institutional formations which made up the complex sum of his public. Summoning another commonplace (from Q. D. Leavis), Gagnier assumes that Wilde straddles a threshold in English culture: the very last moment when it was possible to address a public rapidly fragmenting under the pressures of advanced industrial culture. And Wilde's own career capitulates the process of the century: in five years he descended from the status of star, the most celebrated and known literary man in England, to a numbered nobody in solitary confinement in a not very interesting provincial jail.

Gagnier's analysis of audience(s) uses ideas ostentatiously drawn from Foucault: power, discourse and institution. Wilde, she indicates, created his mass audience using the modern institution of advertising. His dandyism is analysed in terms of the problematic ideal of the gentleman, as it was constructed by the institution of the public school which pervasively produces revolutionary little gays as efficiently as it produces model little Englishmen. Finally, *De Profundis* is related to the institution of the English prison, and more particularly its disciplinary “solitary system”. By this endpoint of his writing career, Wilde was a writer without audience, beyond consumerism, or as Gagnier puts it, sarcastically appropriating the language of liberal criminology: “Through writing as productive labor, Wilde had achieved a resilient form of rehabilitation, one which, as the drastically edited first edition [of *De Profundis*] and the subsequent versions trivialized by later critics indicate, could not be consumed by the public.” The work remained as caviar for artists, rebels and Aestheticism 304D.

what Bill Overton has called the “unofficial side” of Trollope. Six years after the appearance of *Framley Parsonage* some kind of peace was achieved. From that point Hamer discerns “a noticeable improvement in the unity of his vision”. Earlier he often appears in the same novel to be addressing two different audiences, one “intuitive, sceptical, intelligent and sophisticated”, the other “naive, puritanical and censorious”. Now he “seems to stop placating a hostile and censorious reader and permits the development of his narratives to be governed by the sense of their own specific inner logic as it revealed itself to him in the process of writing”.

Mary Hamer is an ideal interpreter of Trollope. She understands and likes him, and in studying his writing process she has made full use of the mass of evidence available in his working diaries, his manuscripts, his letters and of course his autobiography. She writes clearly, pleasantly and with a blessed absence of jargon, occasionally summarizing what has gone before, to make sure the reader is still with her. She sets Trollope against his background, showing that Dickens, Thackeray and George Eliot all to some extent benefited from the experience of serial writing, nor does she neglect the importance of the relationship between the novelist and his illustrator. Marcus Stone was to tell *The Idler* in 1894 that Dickens treated him like a son and when he illustrated *Our Mutual Friend* would often give him “the benefit of his invaluable suggestions”. His relations with Trollope were less happy. This was not Trollope's only unhappy experience and he came to accept the illustration of his work as “a practical necessity which could not be avoided”. He had been wild with excitement when Millais had consented to illustrate *Framley Parsonage*, and to their collaboration Mary Hamer devotes a valuable appendix.

French family firm

David J. Shaw

Imprimeurs et libraires parisiens du XVI^e siècle. Ouvrage publié d'après les manuscrits de Philippe Renouard par la Bibliothèque Nationale, Fascicule Cavellat—Marnet et Cavellat
522pp. Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale.
Paperback, F500.
17177 17455

Philippe Renouard was a Parisian master-printer and a teacher of his craft who had an overwhelming interest in the history of printing in Paris. He published important bibliographies of the printers Simon de Colines and Josse Badius and, first in 1898 and revised and added to subsequently until 1934, an invaluable *Répertoire des imprimeurs parisiens, libraires, fondateurs de caractères et correcteurs d'imprimerie* for the period up to 1600. On his

death the Bibliothèque Nationale acquired his working papers for a complete descriptive bibliography of Parisian printing from 1501 to 1600.

In the 1960s, the Bibliothèque Nationale embarked on two parallel series of publications, drawn from Renouard's notes, supplemented by the work of a team under the direction of Jeanne Veyrin-Forrier (who retired last year as Conservateur en chef de la Réserve). The *Inventaire chronologique des éditions parisiennes du XVI^e siècle* gives short-title information and locations and is arranged on a year-by-year basis; Volume Three last year brought the record up to 1530.

The second series, *Imprimeurs et libraires parisiens du XVI^e siècle*, presents more detailed bibliographical descriptions and is being published alphabetically by name of publisher or printer. The first volume, back in 1964, started with Abada. Later this year, a fourth volume will bring us as far as Johann Blumen-

stock, the Paris agent for the Kobergers of Nuremberg. No one dares to think of how long it will take to get to the end of the alphabet; it will hardly happen in our lifetime. In the mean while, a policy has been adopted of publishing separate fascicles, out of alphabetical order, as material becomes available. The present volume, the work of Isabelle Pantin of the Bibliothèque Nationale, is devoted to the Cavellat dynasty.

The Cavellat family were well connected within the book trade; their in-laws included members of the Badius, Attaignant and Richard dynasties but especially the Marnets, who had been booksellers since the 1480s. Guillaume Cavellat worked as a bookseller from 1547 and from 1563 was in partnership with Jérôme de Marnet, who continued the association with Cavellat's widow from 1577 to 1596. In all, 603 of their publications are described (including the work of three of Cavellat's sons).

For each person, there is a study of his (or sometimes her) career and a résumé of contemporary documentary references, followed by the bibliographical analysis and description of each book, arranged by year of publication, with a list of locations of all known copies.

Cavellat himself specialized particularly in the mathematical and scientific market, but also published important first editions of the poets Du Bellay and Ronsard. The partnership with Marnet shifted the emphasis to religious material and particularly to the production of small-format school and college textbooks, both in French and in Latin. The only printer in the family, Léon Cavellat, printed the textually important first posthumous edition of Ronsard's *Oeuvres* in nine volumes (its four-hundredth anniversary falls this year). He became a notorious anti-government printer for the Sainte Ligue in the early 1590s.

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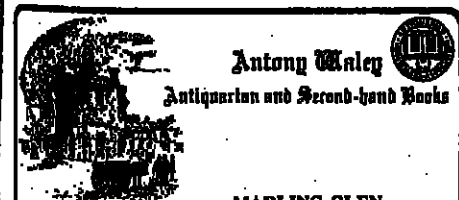
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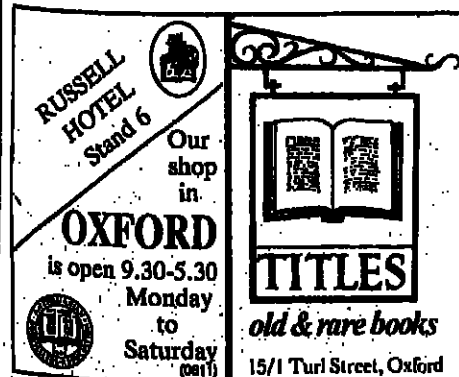
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Personal

MORRISSEY on June 3rd. Last night, 11.15, aged 28 years. Professor of English at University of Saskatchewan. Noted Fielding Bibliographer and Editor. Roy is loved and missed by his wife Kim and family. Funeral service Cheltenham Crematorium 3pm Monday 8th June. Donations in lieu of flowers may be sent for Amnesty International, c/o Philip Ford & Son Funeral Directors Ltd, Driffield House, Stroud, Glos.

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